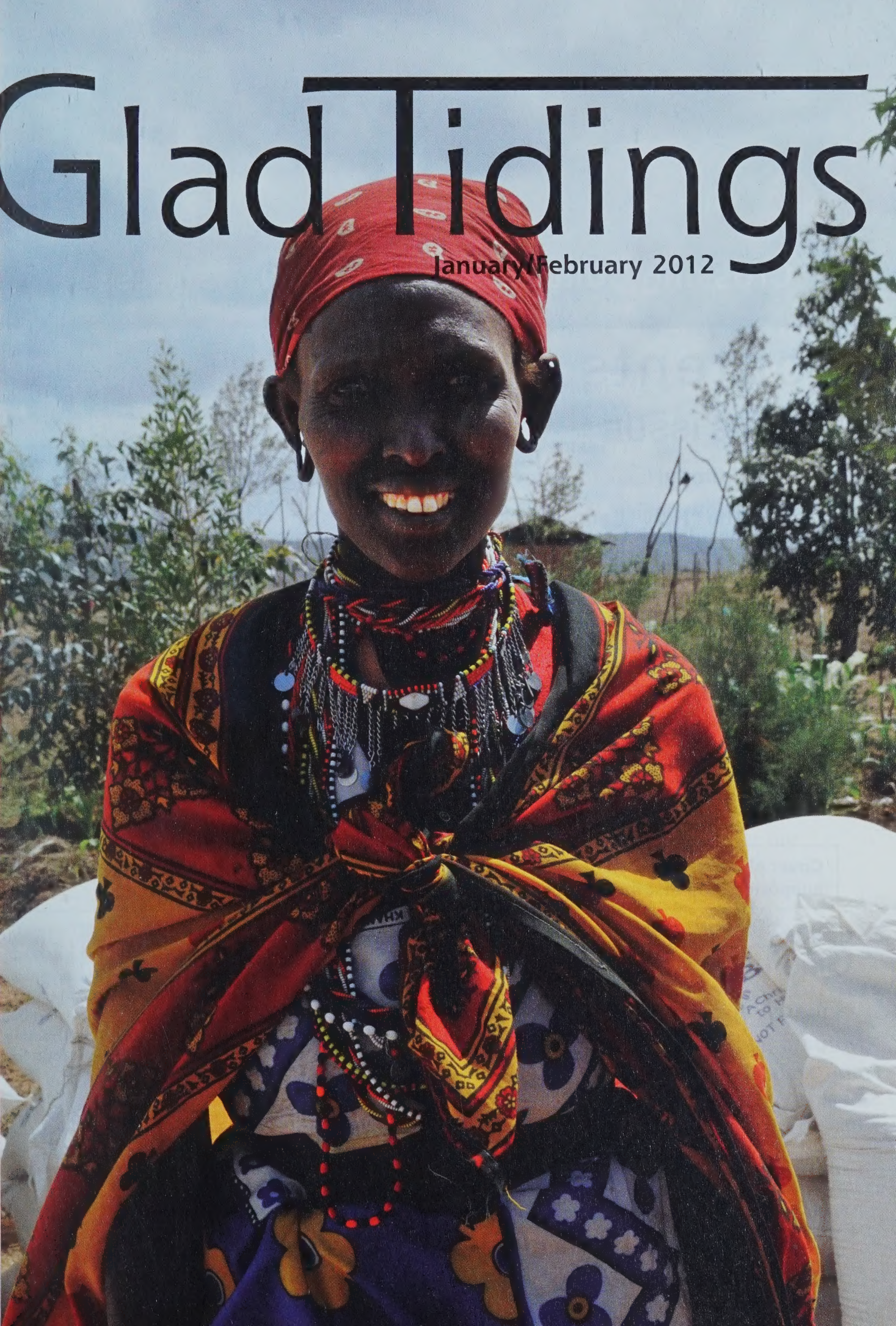
Glad Tidings

January/February 2012



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Cover photo: Nailepo Sikut smiles as she receives food for her family through a PWS&D-supported food distribution in southern Kenya (Barb Summers, PWS&D).

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Editorial

As always, when I start working on a theme for *Glad Tidings*, I am not sure how or sometimes even 'if' the edition will come together. This was definitely what I was faced with this time round. I wanted to look at some of the challenges of being, or perhaps only becoming, a multi-cultural church.

I think all of us want to believe we are not racist, and are open to all cultures. However, I think sometimes it is more valuable to acknowledge that most of us are challenged by this. I thought I was completely open-minded and open to other cultures, until I moved to a city with an incredible diverse ethnicity. Brampton's visible minorities made up over 57% of the population in the 2006 census, and those numbers are rising (up almost 20% from the 2001 census). I will admit that sometimes I feel uncomfortable in my town. There are two playgrounds in our neighbourhood. The one closest to us tends to be where our South Asian neighbours gather. This is where we go most often, and we have always felt very welcomed by them—on occasion even being fed some pakoras or samosas. But sometimes, I will make the walk to the far park. Occasionally I will think, I just want to be surrounded by people who look, talk, dress, and eat more like me. Is this a subtle form of racism? Perhaps it can be a great learning opportunity. Perhaps I can think about this when I think about how so many might feel when they enter our churches?

Many of our churches have an ethnic, usually Caucasian majority. How would I feel entering a church where many don't look like me, talk like me, or eat like me? Even when the language barrier is minimal, what divides us? Is it our belief, our music, our food, our dress? In addition to excluding those of racial minorities, do we also exclude those who are different because of age or financial arrangements? As you read this month's *Glad Tidings*, think of your own congregation or your own WMS group. How might you be showing racism, no matter how subtle? How can you be more inviting to all people and break down dividing walls, whatever they may be?

continued on page 21

Crossing Cultures Together

by Nam Soon Song

We feel and see cultural changes in our world, in our society, and in our neighborhood. Every year, I see cultural changes taking place not only in Toronto, but also in the city of Oakville, where I live. I feel the diversification of our surroundings, as I see the growing number of cultures and peoples of various backgrounds co-existing in our society. There are so many terms and phrases in our society that attempt to capture this cultural change, such as multi-culture, inter-culture, intra-culture, trans-culture, and crossing cultures. These terms were born in different time periods, when people wanted to conceptualize their increasingly diversified society with different peoples and cultures. We no longer have a mono-culture or mono-society because of the transnational world in which we live. Even Korea, once known as a "morning calm country and mono-culture with mono language" now has more than one million live-in foreigners. Hence, it is becoming increasingly important that we learn to live together, by including and getting to know others who are different from us.

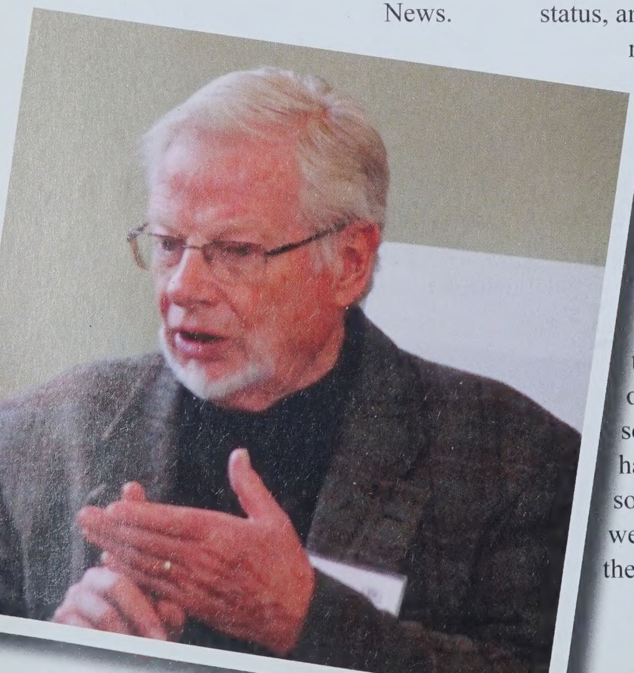
However, the church is still very much "walled-in" and segregated according to different races and languages. Every Sunday, at 11 o'clock, is the most racially segregated time in North America. The church may be the least prepared place for this transnational world. After becoming aware of the reality of the church, the Centre for Asian-Canadian Theology and Ministry at Knox College developed learning opportunities for the church to understand other cultures, called Crossing Cultures Together. Initially, when we held the Crossing Cultures events, we had almost no Caucasian participants, except for the Centre's council members. But recently, the number of Caucasian participants has been growing. Crossing Cultures is the single most important annual event hosted by the Centre for Asian-Canadian Theology with Knox College. In the last three years, it was held in partnership with the Justice Ministry department of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Each year at the Crossing Cultures event, we have dealt with specific themes and issues, involved different cultures in Canada, tasting different cultural food, listening to traditional music from different cultures, and watching traditional dances. We have explored, discussed, and learned about each other's cultures to embrace "others" as "us." In the past, topics have included: Embracing Different Cultures through Communication; Embracing Different Cultures through Communication: Competent Leadership in a Diverse and Changing World; Diversity in Oneness; and in 2011: Church in Transition: Moving from Mono-cultural, to Multi-cultural, to Inter-cultural Churches.

From building a mutual understanding of different cultures, we moved to embracing and creating an inclusive community, which included developing leadership for inter-cultural church community. Through Crossing Cultures events, I discovered how much we have stayed away from each other, confined within our comfort zones, even though we worship the same God, claim that we are One in Christ, and we have been living in the same country for several decades or even a few hundred years. Also, I discovered just how difficult it is to step into each other's shoes. I discovered this yet again through teaching one of my classes, *Teaching the Bible in the Church*. In this class, there is a group component in which students, as a group, teach the Bible based on the book, *Reading the Bible from Margins* by Miguel A. de la Torre. My students mention how challenging it is to read the Bible from the margins. For them, it becomes a real learning moment.

We know that much of Canadian culture has been formed by immigrant peoples from all over the world (except for the influence of the Aboriginal peoples who lived here prior to the arrival of the first immigrants), resulting in a multicultural society with over 150 spoken languages. We believe that God created all peoples in God's image and we are all saved by Christ our Lord. With that faith, the ancestors of Canada went to other countries in the Far East, like Korea and Taiwan, to spread the Good News. Following in the footsteps of such ancestors, what can we do today to live with each other in Canada? What can we do to build an inclusive church community? In other words, what can we do to bring in the 'new comers' to our church community? The 'new comers' are the people with whom we have built and will continue to build Canada together. They are the people who can also build our congregations, with us together, into the future. They are the people whose invisible hands are knocking on our church doors.

In order to build our church community together, it is not enough for us to share food or holidays. Rather, we need to open up our ears and mind with an inviting heart. First, we need to understand where they are—their social and economic status, and the issues they face after moving to Canada. As you might expect, Canada is not an easy place to live for immigrants due to the limited job market, especially for those with non-transferable academic and professional credentials. Without the necessary training in Canada, most of them face difficulty in securing employment, despite having so much to offer to our society. How can they adjust well to Canada if nobody gives them a chance? Employers



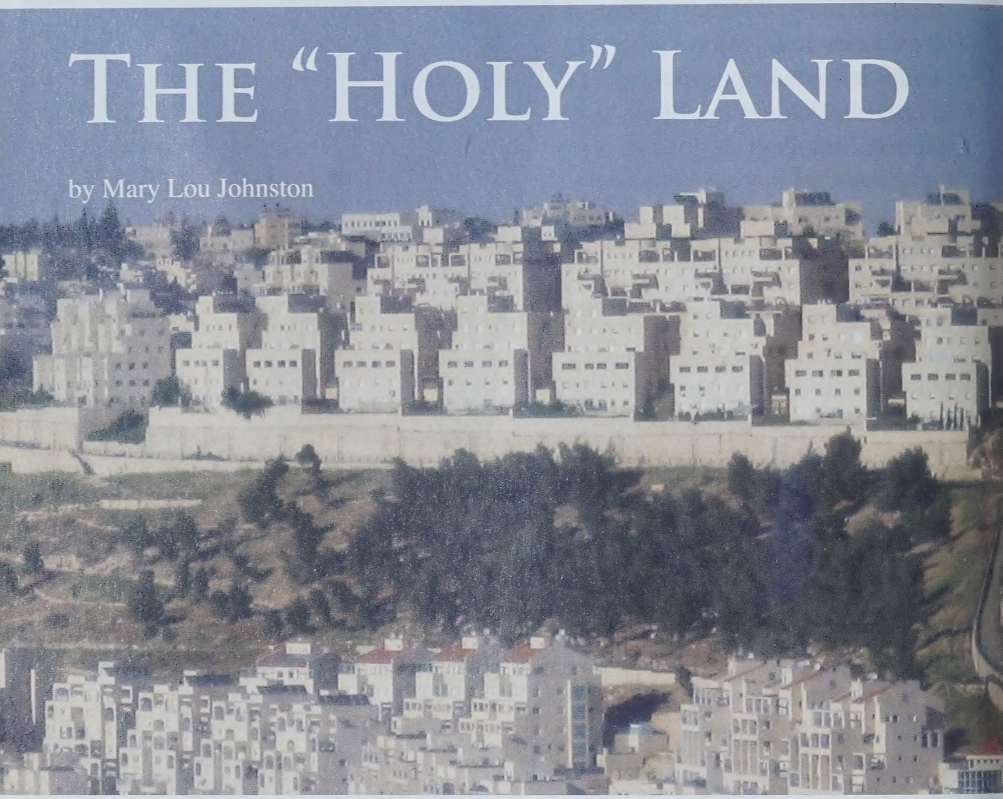
would often say that they cannot hire the new immigrants due to their inadequate proficiency in English. But how can they improve their English skills if they do not get places to practise it? Having the LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) is good, but it is not good enough. New immigrants need people and places to practise their English skills in their own fields. Before the election, the Premier of Ontario, the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, promised that he would encourage employers to hire new immigrants by giving them incentives. I, for one, will be watching closely to see whether or not he makes good on this promise.

We commonly interpret the Old Testament story of Babel Tower as God's curse on people's arrogance. "*Now the whole earth had one language and the same words (Genesis 11:1) .... Therefore, it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth." (Genesis 11:9a)* But, I began to interpret the story of Babel Tower as God's blessing on people. If we had one language, our whole world may have been taken over by a powerful dictator. Having different languages sets a limit to people's desire for absolute power. I believe that when we begin to see the Babel Tower as God's blessing, we may be able to build an inclusive community akin to that of the beginning of the church, *"Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?" (Acts 2:7b–8)*

When we have a listening heart, we are able to hear what others are saying in the same language. And when we have the listening minds in the Holy Spirit, we are able to understand what people say in other languages and begin to build a new Christian community. Let's cross cultures, meet other people from different cultures, and embrace them with our minds by listening to their stories, where they come from, and who they are. Then, we may be able to build an inter-cultural church community. Together we will be one step closer to the new Jerusalem with all nations present.

THE "HOLY" LAND

by Mary Lou Johnston



It is such a small piece of land on God's earth, and yet two peoples claim it ferociously as their own. The trouble is that one group is much stronger, but feels surrounded by enemies and, therefore, justified in building many security walls. The other has been conquered, confined, and occupied by the first group, and its people feel reduced to less than second-class citizens.

These are the Jews and Muslims. A third group consists of Palestinian Arab Christians, who also suffer from the situation in which they too see no hope of a solution. Their leaders, bishops, and ministers, produced a paper called, "A Moment of Truth," in which they appealed to the world to hear their cry for peace with justice.[1] Our Presbyterian Church responded by organizing a group tour in May 2011 to see the situation first-hand.

The history of this region is known and yet not known. Most people remember what a great idea it was to provide a land where the Jewish people could live without the persecution, which had happened so much in the past. And the stories of

the kibbutz and the flowering of the desert by the Jewish newcomers were so admirable that many foreigners visited and worked there in the early years. The Palestinians, on the other hand, became notorious for the PLO's (Palestine Liberation Organization) violence and destruction. Other aspects of the history are less known and help to explain what has happened in the last 63 years.

In the late 19th century, secular Zionists were campaigning for a Jewish state anywhere in the world. After World War I, the Ottoman Empire was divided up by the winning European powers, as was Africa, into states for which they had mandates: Britain for Palestine and Syria, and France for Lebanon. Mr. Balfour of Britain declared the idea of a Jewish state, but it did not come into being until after the horrors of World War II in Europe. Over the years, Jews had been immigrating to that part of the world searching for a safe haven. In 1947, Jews owned 6% of the land and Arabs 94%. The UN Partition Plan allotted 54% to the Jews and 44% to Palestinians. This was rejected and the war began. As it turned out, the British attitude of colonialism was still a powerful one and completely repeated by the immigrating Jews. In official reports, little mention was made of the people who were actually living there. With the support of the world, the land was taken over, in some cases bought, but in many cases just taken by force.

As a result of the wars of 1948 and 1967, in which the Palestinians, aided by the surrounding Arab states, were defeated, the land allotted by Israel to Palestine was reduced to the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza. As well, thousands were forced to flee to refugee camps in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Gaza, where they continue to live. Sometimes families were asked to leave their village temporarily and when they returned, the buildings would have been demolished.

Angered, the Palestinians took their frustrations out in what has become known as the 1st and

2nd Intifadas, forms of violence starting with the throwing of rocks and ending with the bombing of buses and other objectives in Israel. Hence, the decisions of subsequent Israeli governments to increase security restrictions on all aspects of Palestinian life— culminating in the "wall" which continues to be extended.

Today, the strategy of Israel is to make life as difficult as possible for the remaining Palestinians in hopes that they would all just go away. It is a subtle, but deadening kind of persecution. Buildings cannot be built without a permit, but permits are extremely difficult to get. Land is requisitioned for 'military' purposes or for any manner of reasons so that farmers are continually finding that their vineyards or olive groves are being reduced or destroyed. Grand highways have been built across the West Bank linking Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and other places, but they may only be used by Israelis. Other secondary roads must be used by Palestinians, which are blocked by the highways. If a car has a 'P' on the license plate, it cannot be driven in Israel, only in the West Bank. The notorious Separation Barrier has divided families from their farms and made travelling across from one area to the other extremely frustrating with delays and refusals at checkpoints. It does not follow the Green Line (the official boundary), but cuts into the West Bank territory especially around and inside Jerusalem.

This is all happening in the West Bank which is supposed to be Palestinian. It is effectively 'occupied'. Since the 2009 Israeli assault on Gaza, that territory has become more like a prison camp— trade, farming, and fishing are impossible and there is no access to jobs in Israel as before. But the most unjust policy of the Israelis is the building of the settlements on Palestinian land. According to the United Nations, putting up buildings on 'occupied land' is illegal. This policy is not to meet the shortage of housing for Israeli Jews. Rather, people from many countries, particularly Russia, are invited to come to live in Israel. If they have a relative a few generations back who was Jewish, they are entitled to become settlers, even if they are no longer practising Jews. They receive $20,000 and can live a comfortable life with a large area surrounding the settlement protected by the Israeli army. Water is taken from Palestinian sources and sewage is sent out to areas where the Israeli government promises to build facilities, but in many cases has not done so. Incidents of violence from these settlers toward neighbouring Palestinians are frequent.

Hebron, a city in the West Bank, is important for Muslims because of its history, surrounding fertile lands, ancient crafts, architecture, and the famous Abrahimi Mosque—the location of the tombs of Abraham, his sons, and wives, and therefore of interest also to Jews and Christians. Israel has deliberately put a huge settlement just outside the city of Hebron, and another inside, destroying prosperous markets, historical buildings, and homes. Barriers and armed guards (to protect the settlers) are now a feature of the area, but it is the settlers who have thrown objects down onto the Arab markets.

Tourism is a big industry in Israel/Palestine, particularly to the holy sites which are of interest to Christians, who visit in large groups from many countries. But the bulk of the profits, whether from sites in Israel or the West Bank, go to the Israeli government.

In spite of the above outrageous examples of illegal and cruel treatment of one group towards another, there are many groups who are working towards a more fair situation in that troubled land. An Israeli organization has worked for

several years to oppose the demolition of Arab homes. Another Israeli group, called B'Tselem, continues to document in great detail the human rights violations particularly relating to settlements. Recently, the Israeli parliament has worked to restrict 'leftist' organizations like B'Tselem and other non-violent groups among Palestinians, which support boycotts as long as Israel continues its noncompliance with international law. Sabeel is a Palestinian-Christian group striving for "justice, peace, non-violence, liberation, and reconciliation for the different national and faith communities." It encourages groups from other countries to come and work towards these goals as does the YMCA, which also has a 'plant an olive tree' campaign.

Jews, Muslims, and Christians—all children of the one God. Today, throughout the land of Israel-Palestine, layers of rock forming the ruins of buildings tell the story of conflict—from Biblical times, through Greek and Roman, the coming of Islam, the Ottoman Empire, and finally the state of Israel. Now, the persecuted have become the persecutors. "What we need today is partnership, and not alienation, cooperation and not separation, liberation and not dominion. This is our only future." (Rev. Naim Ateek, Director of Sabeel.)

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[1] The "Moment of Truth" document can be downloaded at http://www.kairospalestine.ps/?q=content/document.

From Racism to Reconciliation

by Jim Smith

This is the story of two congregations. Perhaps more accurately, it is the narrative of how two congregations moved from a horrible, conflict-ridden situation of angst and dysfunction to a harmonious relationship that has not only lasted nearly a decade now, but which is on the verge of forming into a relationship even more unique within The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We anticipate that this new relationship, once it has been formed and tested, might provide a model for other congregational situations, but that is a little while down the road. Still, our current relationship does provide such a model right now.

Let's begin by looking at the two congregations. One is the Central Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, British Columbia. This is a congregation that was initially formed in 1925 by members and adherents from both St. John's Presbyterian Church and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, both of which voted to enter into the union that formed the United Church of Canada. Some 800 people were, for various reasons, not willing to become part of that new church and founded Central. They purchased the Congregationalist building on Thurlow Street and began worshipping together. The congregation of Central was primarily, if not exclusively, Scottish-Irish in ethnicity, many of whom were immigrants.

Over the years, Central dwindled in numbers, but in 1975 received a boost. Under a property exchange deal, the old church building was transferred to St. Paul's Hospital for the construction of a new tower and Central received five building lots across the street plus cash to erect a new facility. That new building was dedicated in 1976 and remains in use today. However, by the mid-1990s, Central was in financial distress, having drained all their reserve funds, and sought relief in a solution common to many similar congregations, namely to allow an immigrant congregation to use the facility.

The immigrant congregation was the Galilee Korean Presbyterian Church, part of our denomination. That congregation had started as a mission project with a particular focus on ministry to Korean-speaking international students. The downtown location was ideal for Galilee as there were literally thousands of such students living in downtown Vancouver in the 1990s.

That relationship started as most similar situations do—as a landlord tenant arrangement, with a defined schedule of usage and of corresponding fees. And just as most similar situations also do, this one started to deteriorate fairly quickly. Irritations within Central over what was perceived as a lack of respect for both the building and the rental contract soon flared. Resentment within Galilee over being "nickel and dimed" over every request soon deepened. The conflict spiralled ever deeper until finally Galilee left to rent facilities elsewhere. While some within Central felt a sense of "good riddance," many others were left with a bitter aftertaste, feeling that somehow providing glory to God had been shoved aside in favour of other interests.

I arrived at the beginning of 2002—two months after Galilee had left. I discovered that there were a significant number of Korean international students attending Central, primarily to practise their English skills, and there was also an ESL Bible Study being conducted at Central. These students were a great asset to the congregation, but naturally tended to cluster together at the coffee hour. I wondered if there was a way to get them to integrate more fully, more quickly, especially because they were on limited-time visas. I thought that perhaps learning enough conversational Korean to say, hello, my name is, and please come meet, might help. It did, and before many months had passed, we began to receive overtures from Galilee to see if we might be open to them returning. Thinking it might be good for both congregations if we could make it work, I researched what had gone wrong.

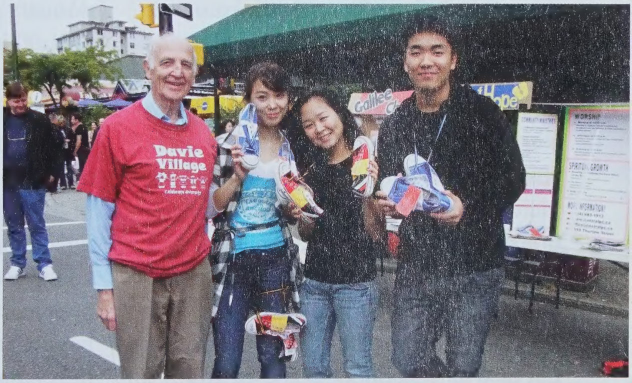
The results of that research were both disturbing and enlightening. Disturbing, in that one of the key factors had been a latent or residual form of West Coast anti-Asian racism. There are those within the denomination who react with angry defensiveness to any charge of racism within our churches; however, the denomination has acknowledged the reality of racism both within the church and the community. An overture to the 127th General Assembly (2001), from the Presbytery of East Toronto, was addressed in the Life and Mission Agency Report to the 130th General Assembly (2004). Their report included an extensive quote from the Board of World Mission Report some 20 years earlier, declaring, "The following quote from the section entitled 'The Pluralistic Church' is as relevant in 2004 as it was in 1981."[1] In addition to a declaration that "The Presbyterian Church in Canada is an ethnically and culturally pluralistic church," the quote included this paragraph on racism:

> A third challenge which is of prime importance is racism. There are sometimes overt, and blatant expressions both in the church and the community, which must be challenged directly and publicly by members of the majority group … i.e., white English-speaking

> Presbyterians. Perhaps the larger challenge is in the subtler forms of racism, because while members of minority groups may be sensitive or even super-sensitive to these expressions, the members of the majority group are often oblivious, cavalier or even unintentional participants. A racially sensitive majority group will make for a strong pluralistic church.[2]

The report goes on to point out that the church has taken initiatives worth noting, including the creation of the two Korean ethnic Presbyteries and the introduction of programs at the colleges to reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity within the denomination. It also moves to develop a theology of inclusion based on Ephesians 2:14, expanding upon the image there of breaking down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles and extending it to cultural and ethnic divisions within the church.

The deterioration in relationships between the Central Presbyterian Church in Vancouver and the Galilee Korean Church might be one further example of such racism. One specific example of such racism was the accusation made by several members that their previous congregation (Mount Pleasant) had been “taken over by those Koreans.”[3] The pejorative expression “those Koreans” was a clear example of exclusion as eloquently



Central Presbyterian Church
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defined by theologian Miroslav Volf. Volf's definition of exclusion involves a combination of two processes: First, a process of disconnect and separation in which the "other" then emerges as an enemy that must be pushed away from the self and driven out of its space or as a nonentity—a superfluous being—that can be disregarded and abandoned."[4] The second process—a contrasting and perhaps more subtle form of exclusion—transpires through subjugating assimilation by "… not recognizing the other as someone who in his or her otherness belongs to the pattern of interdependence. The other then emerges as an inferior being who must either be assimilated by being made like the self or be subjugated to the self."[5] Rejection, or annihilation through absorption, thus in Volf's view form a powerful pair of ways to implement exclusion, both of which were evidenced at Central.

A second and hugely significant factor in the deterioration of the relationship was the landlord tenant nature of that relationship. On the one hand, the people of Central could not understand why the people of Galilee could not or would not honour the clearly specific terms of the rental agreement, particularly the time-specific terms. On the other hand, the people of Galilee could not understand why they were being treated like renters instead of fellow workers in the Kingdom of God.

We decided that a different foundation would be required if the relationship were to work. What was adopted was the concept of a "Shared Ministry" in which Central would share some of the time and space within the facility, and Galilee would share with the upkeep of the facility, including labour and costs. To highlight that this was a different kind of relationship it was established as a Covenant. In practice, besides a document outlining the basics of the covenant, the covenant was established between the ministry team at Galilee and the congregation of Central at Central's worship service, and the same day between the ministry team at Central and the congregation of Galilee at Galilee's worship service. This covenanting ceremony consisted of affirmations by both parties that they would support each other in prayer, in ministry, and in all other Christian support. This became the foundational key in the new relationship, but there were several other key components as well.

Another crucial component was the establishment of an effective bi-directional communication/liaison pipeline between the two congregations. It is essential that the people involved in that communication have a huge heart for it to work, as the channel must be significantly more than a defined way to pass on complaints. In our case, that channel was implemented by an Elder (Gillan Jackson), who had and continues to have a deep passion to make it work.

Education, particularly and specifically in the area of intercultural communications, was also vital. Without such education and training, we are blissfully unaware of how much of our life, our attitudes, and our actions are formed by the practices of our own culture—and thus tend to be quickly intolerant of the practices of peoples from cultures differing from our own. Perhaps a classic example is that of meeting oncoming people on the sidewalk; white Canadians typically, without thinking, move to the right, expecting the oncoming person to do likewise and so pass left-shoulder to left-shoulder. People from Asian countries, especially those from former British Colonies where the driving is done the same way as in Britain, namely on the left, find it just natural to move to the left, expecting the oncoming person to do the same. Of course, in Vancouver this often leads to a momentary stand-off, with the white-Canadian muttering to themselves, "stoopid Asians, don't even know how to walk" and the Asian person thinking that white Canadians are not very polite. Once you know and understand the cultural factors at work, you'll never meet people on the sidewalk the same way again.

Similar cultural factors were at work at Central as well; for example, the homage paid to time. North Americans in general, Canadians in particular, tend to be very time-focused, and usually more-or-less "on time" for events such as meetings. White Canadians, who are unaware that the Korean custom is "if you arrive before the meeting is over you are not late," often have difficulty understanding what seems to be a Korean disrespect for schedules, and this was the case at Central. The 'naming' identified by Volf was another example, and it took deliberate, but gentle, effort to get people to switch from saying "those Koreans" to "the Galilee people"—another subtle, but powerful change.

The new, covenantal, Shared Ministry relationship between the two congregations began on January 1, 2003, and continues to improve over the years. Minor teething issues have naturally arisen from time to time, but have been quickly resolved to the satisfaction of both sides. As mentioned at the beginning, by the time this article goes to print we anticipate a whole new relationship will have been defined and implemented, founded on what we have learned and bringing the two congregations even closer together in harmony. Hopefully, we will have a footnote to add, or perhaps even a follow-up article.

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[1] *The Acts and Proceedings of the 130th General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada 2004*, 382.

[2] *Acts and Proceedings 2004*, 383.

[3] Comments expressed by several former members of that congregation failed to realize or admit that their previous congregation had been in significant, even terminal, decline long before the Vancouver Korean Congregation was established. Indeed, a long-time clergy person has affirmed that many within the Presbytery anticipated the "imminent demise" of that congregation as early as the 1950s, more than 20 years before the final dissolution.

[4] Miroslav Volf, Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 67.

[5] Volf, *Exclusion*, 67.

Living as a Middle Eastern Christian in Canada

by Basma A.Shalaby

Being a Middle Eastern Christian is quite normal in the Middle East, albeit a minority. The estimated population percentage for Christianity ranges from nearly 40% in Lebanon, to 15% in Egypt, to less than 10% throughout the other Middle Eastern and North African countries. Christianity started in the Middle East with Jesus being born in Bethlehem (now in Israel). Based on the Bible, we also learn that the infant Jesus, Mary, and Joseph fled to the land of Egypt to escape the killings of young male infants during King Herod's reign.

Egypt's history with Christianity started in the Old Testament, with Abraham and Joseph going to the land of Egypt. Also, Egypt was mentioned in the Old Testament over 500 times. One notable passage of the Lord is in Isaiah 19:25, where he has specifically blessed the people of Egypt. Also in the New Testament there have been some notations of Egypt. So this part of the world witnessed the birth of Christianity more than two thousand years ago.

When you talk about the birth of the Presbyterian Church in Egypt, and other Middle East countries, it is prudent to note the origins of the Reformation movement. It started in 16th-century Germany, when Martin Luther began protesting some of the Roman Catholic Church's practices. Others shared his mission. One of the most notable individual being John Calvin, who in the mid 1500s published a book titled, "Christian Institutes" (*Institutio Christianae religionis*). Upon Calvin's death in 1564, Calvinism extended internationally to the Netherlands and France, and then Scotland, England, Ireland and Germany, and finally to the United States. And from there started the Presbyterian missions to Egypt which began in the early 1800s.

In Egypt, Christianity at large started in the years 45–65 AC with Saint Mark, who had established the first church in Alexandria, known now as the Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt. Then, many decades later it was followed by the Roman Catholic Church and the Franciscan movement in the 1600s and 1700s, and through many missionaries and other local academics and intellectuals throughout the 1800s under the ruling period of Mohammed Ali and others.

Many missionaries have started their missions in Syria and Lebanon (at that time it was one country) and then extended to Egypt and

Sudan. Some notable leaders who paved the way in Egypt were, Pastor John Hodge, Pastor Julian Lancing, and Miss Sarah Hearth from North America. Other Presbyterian missionaries followed and started their missions in various parts of Cairo, then in the southern part of Egypt (in cities called Assiut in the south) and spread throughout the land of Egypt as it exists now to its northern and southern parts. In the early 1800s, a lot of Christians resettled from Syria into various parts of Egypt and this helped spread Christianity further in several parts of the country.

Presbyterian missionaries, males and females, started visiting the existing seminaries and schools of other Christian institutions, such as the Franciscan, Catholic, and Coptic Orthodox churches and established their own Christian schools. Most of these schools were for both girls and boys.

The first Presbyterian Church was established in Egypt in 1860. This church expanded with additional institutions for education, health care, and an orphanage. All along, the Presbyterian Church has acknowledged the role of both men and women in Christian and Egyptian society. Women's Christian groups were established with the leadership of female missionaries and this started women's Christian meetings all over Egypt up till today. The Presbyterian Church is still strong in the entire

Almanarah
rom Vision To Reality

Middle Eastern world, including Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, and the Emirates.

In Canada, the Arabic-speaking Presbyterian Church started with Egyptian and Iraqi families and up until today, these churches have a mixed congregation.

At Almanarah Presbyterian Church (APC) in Mississauga, one of the key visions of Rev. Sherif Garas is to have the APC church act as a source of Christian and spiritual enrichment and encouragement to all Arabic-speaking families. Today, the APC has a number of families from Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. All families worship and serve together in a harmonious way, while loving and serving one another. We are a blessed congregation that, as one unit, we seek the Lord in our midst, both in our daily lives and through our personal life.

We have elders—males and females. They are selected based on their Christian belief, their faith, and their personal traits. We understand that other Arabic-speaking Presbyterian churches back in Egypt and the United States have ordained female elders as well. Women in the APC, as in other churches, play a key role in the choir, Sunday school, the ladies' Bible meetings, Vacation Bible Schools, and other Christian-based programs within the church. The APC has also sought the preaching services of some Christian Middle Eastern women who are recognized in their own Middle Eastern churches as preachers and who are gifted in the Lord's word and its teachings. Christian family counselling, given by a certified Christian lady, is available at the APC on Friday evenings to address new families.

Throughout the years of formation, and still ongoing, The Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC) has been extremely supportive of our cause and mission. Rev. Sherif Garas, upon his graduation in 2002 from the Toronto School of Theology, prepared and documented a case to the PCC, and the Presbytery of Brampton, of his vision to establish a church for the Arabic-speaking community in Mississauga. Both the PCC and the Presbytery of Brampton encouraged the development of the APC, and since its inception in the Spring of 2003, they have been supportive in every aspect. They have strengthened us spiritually, through the training of the Pastor, and provided a source of governance and encouragement.

With this support, we were able to acquire land and build a new church (including a gym and classes), with a portion of the land kept for a future sanctuary. The APC has an ongoing relationship with other Arabic-speaking churches in southern Ontario where at times we host various preachers and Christian song leaders.

During 2010, the APC hosted a "cultural day," where every Middle

Eastern country represented in the congregation had a dedicated table where they shared their foods, heritage, and mementos from the region. We also had a slide show noting the history of our various homeland countries with some features of our heritage. That day we were also blessed with many guests from the Middle Eastern region sharing their Christian musical ministries and their talents with us. We worshiped with Christian songs shared from their homeland and we listened to a wonderful pastor from that region.

The APC church is continuing to spread God's Word to Arabic speakers in the Mississauga area. We pray that the APC will reach out to more people as they become a part of the kingdom of God, and that we will continue to be a source of spiritual enrichment to people as well as provide support and encouragement for new, and not-so-new, immigrants to Canada as they face the difficulties of settlement and relocation from their native lands.

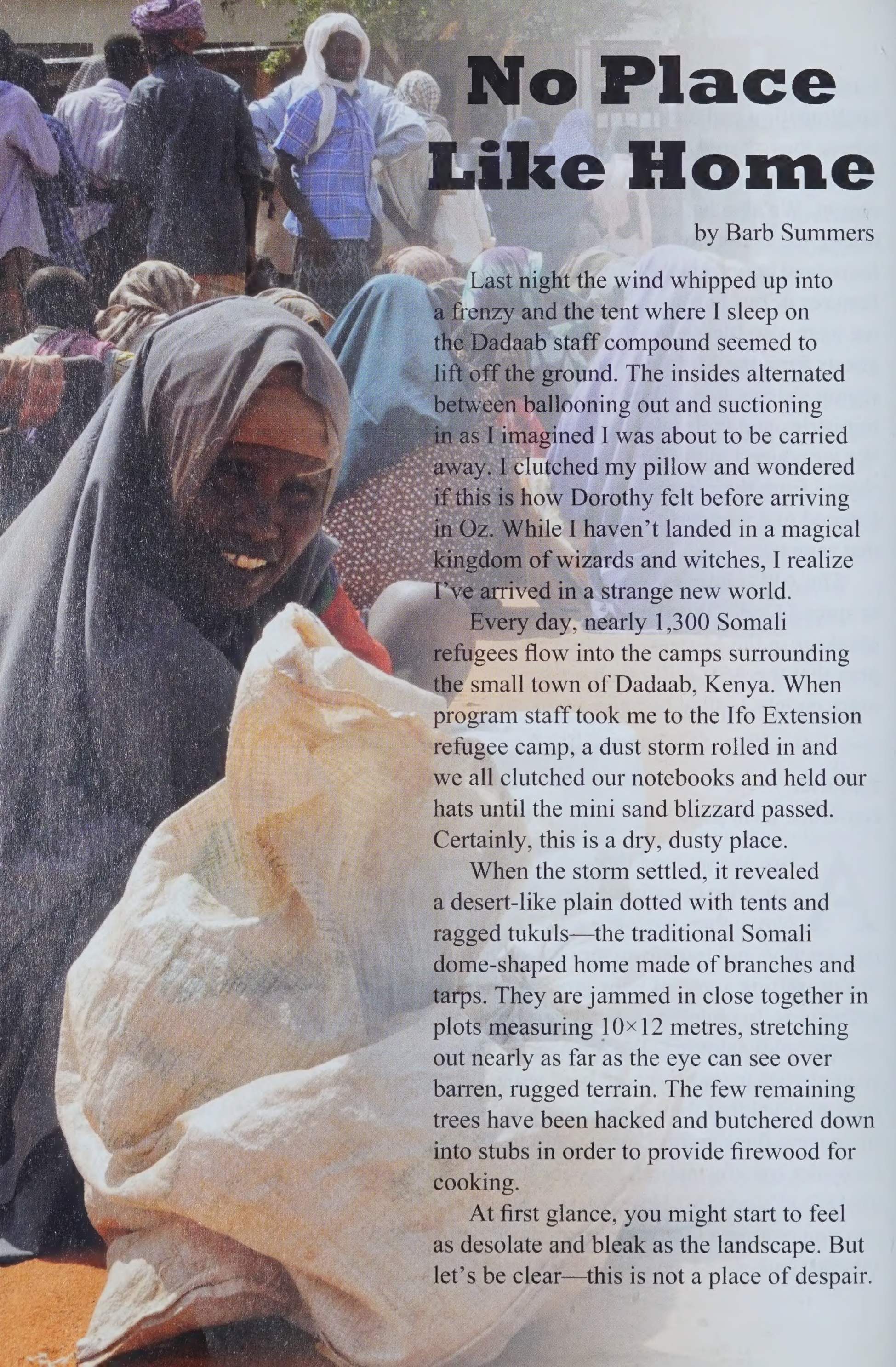
In closing, the APC and Rev. Sherif Garas, its leader, its elders, its members, adherents, and all those who serve in the church selflessly either physically, spiritually, or financially, would like to sincerely thank the Lord, the PCC, and the Presbytery of Brampton for their continuous support and encouragement to our community of Arabic-speaking believers in Canada.

Basma A.Shalaby is an elder at APC.

Editorial

continued from page 3

Also, as you read through this edition of *Glad Tidings*, I want you to consider transformation. At our latest Council Executive meeting in November, we were asked the question: What is the difference between resurrection and transformation? I ask you to think about that same question. When visiting some of your groups, I am encouraged by the energy in your gatherings. In churches where worship is staid and traditional, I will find WMS groups boldly singing, We are Marching in the Light of God, while marching around your meeting space. In congregations that seem so worried about their own survival that they question the value of outward giving, I see WMS groups increasing their givings, especially to the WMS Together We Can! projects. Consider transformation, for your life and for your group. How can you welcome all of God's people? How can you transform and revitalize your group? How can you continue God's amazing work that the WMS began so long ago in new, vibrant, and, dare I say, different ways?



No Place Like Home

by Barb Summers

Last night the wind whipped up into a frenzy and the tent where I sleep on the Dadaab staff compound seemed to lift off the ground. The insides alternated between ballooning out and suctioning in as I imagined I was about to be carried away. I clutched my pillow and wondered if this is how Dorothy felt before arriving in Oz. While I haven't landed in a magical kingdom of wizards and witches, I realize I've arrived in a strange new world.

Every day, nearly 1,300 Somali refugees flow into the camps surrounding the small town of Dadaab, Kenya. When program staff took me to the Ifo Extension refugee camp, a dust storm rolled in and we all clutched our notebooks and held our hats until the mini sand blizzard passed. Certainly, this is a dry, dusty place.

When the storm settled, it revealed a desert-like plain dotted with tents and ragged tukuls—the traditional Somali dome-shaped home made of branches and tarps. They are jammed in close together in plots measuring 10×12 metres, stretching out nearly as far as the eye can see over barren, rugged terrain. The few remaining trees have been hacked and butchered down into stubs in order to provide firewood for cooking.

At first glance, you might start to feel as desolate and bleak as the landscape. But let's be clear—this is not a place of despair.

I'm not sure how to begin to describe the refugee camps at Dadaab when I know you've watched the news reports and heard horrific stories of death and trauma. I've now visited the reception centres managed by PWS&D partners, Lutheran World Federation, and I could tell similar tales. People line up at the gates in tattered clothes with sunken eyes, emaciated, malnourished, and exhausted. There are graveyards that line the outskirts; some dedicated exclusively for children, who have died from malnutrition and disease. At the heavily guarded camp boundaries, people stream in with the few belongings they have left. You might think they would be battering at the gates, clamouring to get at the warehouses of food and supplies waiting for distribution inside. You might even think they would be violent, ready to do anything in order to receive attention and food.

It's actually very calm. The camp generator chugs along in the background like a helicopter perpetually flying off in the distance. People inside the camp shuffle through the sand as they move between stations with their ration cards. A baby cries at the vaccination centre. Every now and then, a voice speaks out from a megaphone as a staff member speaks to new refugees about the process ahead.

It's all very organized and efficient. People arriving are quickly provided with water and high-energy biscuits, then led to a shaded waiting area for processing into a system that will identify family members, address health issues, and distribute clothing and supplies provided by a host of aid agencies. The camp's passionate and dedicated relief workers speak to people, deal with concerns, identify unique vulnerabilities, and treat people with the dignity and respect they deserve.

The grim pictures on the news are true: I have seen children that embody

They come with a dream of finding food, water, shelter—and ultimately, life.

what a heartbreak must look like. I have looked into the eyes of people simply too tired to blink or react to the presence of a media crew that zooms in on them and videotapes the scene. I have watched people sit patiently in the sand and wait motionlessly for their turn to come while the blazing African sun scorches down on them.

However, while Somalis crossing into Kenya have made the difficult, but unavoidable decision to leave their homes for the sake of survival, they do not arrive totally empty-handed. They come with a dream of finding food, water, shelter—and ultimately, life.

See, despite all the obstacles before them, people have arrived. They are weary, worn and hungry, but they are here, and now the journey to recovery can begin.

I interviewed a woman today who recently moved into a tent at the new Ifo Extension camp after waiting two months on the outskirts in a makeshift shelter. Habiba Ahmed told me that she travelled 15 days on foot from Somalia with her six children in order to get to Dadaab. Her children stared up at me, fascinated, with dirty, grubby faces, and runny noses. Habiba said she wished she had more food, more water, and a private latrine. But then she grinned and said, "I am happy here. In Somalia we didn't have peace or food." She said she likes the staff, who help her, and she's incredibly grateful for all the assistance. For now, the camp is home.

There are many hurdles still to be overcome; the camps at Dadaab are temporary solutions to massive problems, but at least we take that first step, reaching out a hand to our brothers and sisters, providing shelter for those seeking a life of dignity with peace and food.

There's no place like home.

Barb Summers is Communications Coordinator with Presbyterian World Service & Development—a member of the ACT Alliance. She travelled to East Africa in August to visit the work of program partners who support people suffering from drought and famine.

RESOLUTIONS

by Colleen Wood

It is the time of resolutions. It is that time when we wake up, generally around January 1, with determination. Perhaps by the time you get around to reading this, your determination may have already faltered. Perhaps, your determination is still strong. Perhaps you made no resolutions, and are living with that decision, perhaps with guilt, perhaps with a sense of accomplishment (your choice to not make a resolution means you accomplished what you set out to do—nothing!).

Although I am not a huge fan of New Year's Resolutions, I do like goal setting. Resolutions all seem big and bold to me—more trumpet fair than action. Resolutions, such as losing weight or eating healthier, are big! Goals, however, done well, are more planned, perhaps requiring smaller steps. For me, setting goals needs to be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely. For me, the timely part is critical. I can commit to short-term goals. For example, if eating healthier was your resolution, maybe change to a goal of eating one new fruit or vegetable every week for a month. This is a very specific goal—one that is realistic and measurable. Hopefully, at the end of three months you will have found a few new healthy foods to incorporate into your 'healthier' diet. Success in small steps!

Sometimes we set spiritual resolutions, which is a very good thing. Many of us can think of ways we can enhance our walk with God. Again, I would suggest goal setting in this area over grander resolutions. A common resolution for the new year is reading the entire Bible before the year ends. We start out with great gusto, and then we get bogged down with some of the slower passages, especially if you are not already a regular Bible reader. Perhaps a small goal would be more attainable. Your goal might be to read the entire New Testament in a year. Set out on a journey of small good habits, and these can lead to larger future goals!

The same goal setting concepts can work for a group. I often hear WMS groups talking about wanting more young members, or even just increasing their numbers. Although this goal comes from good intentions, it is a lofty one, and one that is hard to achieve, mainly because groups cannot force anyone to join. However, a realistic goal for a group might be to invite one non-WMS member to your meeting every month until the end of June. This is something you can do. Prayerfully consider who might benefit from attending a WMS meeting, not who might be a warm body, or who might be able to serve as treasurer. Also, consider what parts of your WMS meeting might be of most interest to an outsider, and spend the majority of your time focusing on that for the next few months.

Finally, you might be asking yourself, why should we even set goals? As children, our goals were usually set for us. Our parents, leaders, and teachers, set our goals. We had to learn how to tell time, tie shoes, recite our alphabet, memorize scripture, run around a track, put our head in the water, and brush our teeth. Learning and growing was a part of our everyday routine. As parents, these might not have been presented as formal goals, but they were things we encouraged our children to strive for. Yet, as adults, we sometimes get comfortable and stop striving for new accomplishments. Goals can help! Whether it is learning a new craft, reaching out to others more regularly, or increasing the time we spend with God, nothing feels better than accomplishing something new. Start small and before you know it even your grandest resolutions might become a reality!

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WMS Council Executive

The WMS Council Executive had a full agenda when they met in Toronto on November 3-5. Prior to the meeting's official start at 5 p.m., many of the committees had already met and had done some great work.

The first committee to meet was the newly formed Justice Committee. They first refined their mandate as: *To raise awareness and do advocacy of social justice issues, promoting human dignity for all people, with a special emphasis on women and children.* They also chose the areas that they would focus on as they begin their work. These will be human trafficking, the Roma people, and refugees in Canada.

In the afternoon, the Council Planning Committee met to discuss ideas for the 2012 Council meeting at Crieff Hills. They chose as their theme, Be Transformed, looking at the words of Proverbs 3:5–6.

The formal meetings began with Council President, Joan Smith, welcoming everyone and opening the meeting with prayer. She reported briefly on the past few months, but quickly changed her focus to the meetings at hand. She reminded us that in addition to our regular business, we would spend some time brainstorming on the future of the WMS. She mentioned that we had heard our past President Druce Bryan say that, the time for band aid solutions has passed. That was many years ago, but it is a more urgent message for us today. Joan challenged us to step things up and make definite decisions before it is too late. She also encouraged us that any new direction taken should honour and encourage the faithful WMS groups to continue as long as they wish. She left us with a reminder that we have a great past to celebrate, that good things continue to happen, but that the time to move forward is now.

After further committee meetings on Friday morning, the afternoon saw much of the routine business accomplished. Some exciting new initiatives were confirmed. First, the WMS will work with the Women in Ministry Committee (and also invite the Atlantic Missionary Society to become involved) to create and grant a Presbyterian Woman of Distinction Award. The award will be presented at the Women's Gathering event in 2014.

The year 2014 will also see the 100th Anniversary Celebration of the WMS. Although the celebration will likely occur at the Women's Gathering, a separate committee, including all the Synodical presidents, has been set up to plan this event.

The next WMS exposure trip will see the WMS joining in with The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Middle East Tour from October 22 to November 1. A number of WMS members have already expressed interest, and other interested members should contact the office as soon as possible. The Moment of Truth Document from Kairos will be the basis for this tour and the trip will be led by the Rev. Noel Gordon.

A very challenging decision for the Council Executive to make involved the very popular ministry of providing knitted preemie pneumonia vests to Malawi and India. For the past several years, the focus has primarily been on India as the vests were not being utilized in Malawi. We had also been made aware that in Malawi, when the vests have been received, we have taken work away from the local women. So, with this knowledge, we will stop sending knitting to Malawi. However, in an effort to continue to show our support to Malawi, we will consider naming a project in Malawi as one of our next Together We Can! projects.

There are also challenges with the vests in India. Many are coming in too large and the cost of mailing is extremely high. In light of these considerations, the year 2012 will be the last year that the national WMS will provide financial assistance to mail the vests. As well, a reminder for those groups knitting vests—please use baby yarn so that the vests fit preemies. We do acknowledge that many WMS members, and individuals beyond the WMS, have embraced this project and many have been helped by it. For those groups who want to continue knitting, the WMS, through their newsletter and *Glad Tidings*, will provide other options for knitting projects, such as prayer shawls, knitting for local missions, or knitting for your local hospital.

In other committee news, we were treated to a demonstration of the new Book Room web site. It is a great tool for ordering books online. Also, as part of the committee news, *Glad Tidings* will begin to include a four-session mission study, beginning with their July/August 2012 edition.

As part of our meetings, we also enjoyed three guest speakers. Stephen Allen, Executive Secretary for Justice Ministries, encouraged us in our justice ministry. He said it is a great opportunity, is life giving, is energizing for an organization, and is a great way to work ecumenically and engage young adults.

Rick Fee, General Secretary of the Life and Mission Agency, also spoke. He said one of the biggest issues before the Life and Mission Agency is the regional staffing issue. Nothing is written down as to how the grants can be used so as questions come in, they must be dealt with by the Life and Mission Agency.

He also informed us of a new committee of The Presbyterian Church in Canada that is to receive input and then craft a vision and mission statement for the PCC. They want ideas from individuals, groups, and committees. Rick encouraged the Synodicals, Presbyterials, and individual WMS members to come up with something and to send it in.

Our final speakers were David and Anna Pándy-Szekeres, PCC missionaries in Eastern Europe, who are currently home on furlough. Anna began by bringing greetings from many of the women's groups, and others as well, that our WMS women visited on an exposure tour many years ago. It is wonderful to be able to celebrate these connections.

Anna also shared her sadness that during her stay in Canada she has heard of many Canadian congregations closing down. This is similar to what she sees in Romania. But she is pleased to report that in Sub Carpathian Ukraine, the church is flourishing. They had been suppressed during 50 years of communism and now they are so excited that they can worship. The number of pastors has almost doubled since 1993! She feels privileged to work there.

David then continued by first familiarising us with the Eastern European region. David works with the Hungarian minority in the Ukraine. In 1991, Ukraine gained its independence from the Soviet Union. When that happened, the Ukrainian economy collapsed. Yet there was hope. Christians were no longer persecuted and they began to rebuild, with help from churches around the world.

David's focus, and much of the focus of the RCCU (Reformed Church of Sub-Carpathian Ukraine), is education! One early project of the RCCU was the establishment of Christian schools to share the gospel, teach Hungarian culture, and provide excellent education. In 1993, the first secondary school opened and within two years, another two schools were added. For the RCCU, there is a strong connection between church and school. Currently, the RCCU schools provide an excellent education so students are now attending for an education, and not only because it is a Christian school!

David also works with the Terra Dei Foundation that provides education on how to raise vegetables in an environmentally friendly way. It is a model farm that raises and experiments with many different crops.

Part of David's ministry is also education with the Roma people. They have been neglected, and have neglected themselves, in many ways. They are massively unemployed, and tend to live in very poor conditions on the edges of town, often outside of a town or city's infrastructure. David's work helps them to get a better education, and also teaches them about the gospel, and lets them know that the gospel is for them! The Roma people make up about 10% of the Hungarian population. Looking at the youth, 50% of the Hungarian population under the age of 8 are Roma. And the Roma people are expanding around the world with about 10,000 living in Toronto right now. The Hungarian churches in the PCC have developed a strategy to work with Roma children in Toronto.

Much of the rest of our time was spent considering the future of the WMS. We reviewed the focus of the WMS today (survival, fellowship, raising funds for mission, study, prayer, business, promotion of the WMS). We also considered ways that the WMS is 'doing' mission today (prayer, study, service educating churches, advocacy, encouraging mission staff, local mission, funder). We also looked at the ways we are no longer doing mission. In 1972, the church took over much of the WMS mission work, including staffing. We lost much of our power as decision makers. Also, very few groups are currently involved in children and youth ministry.

We also had discussions regarding the Women's Gathering. Many loved the energy and feeling of family at the event. Many left feeling hopeful, challenged, inspired, educated, overwhelmed, and spiritually reborn and one individual even stated that they were, "high as a kite!" Many felt it was fabulous to gather with that many women, and that it would not have been as good if it was a mixed event. This led us to wonder if the WMS is about mission, women, or both. Most felt both.

We also considered if our structure is too formal. Most areas are having difficulties filling all the executive positions in both Presbyterials and Synodicals, but one difficulty is that in some areas, the Presbyterials are stronger, and in other areas it is Synodicals. Because of this, Synodicals are encouraged to set aside time at their next meeting to discuss the structure of the WMS in relation to their area.

Finally, we discussed the difference between transformation and resurrection. We find we often get bogged down with our name, the Women's Missionary Society, when what we need to focus on is our vision. We also understand that the image of the WMS is a problem. After much discussion, a motion passed that will see a task force formed to answer the following questions:

- Why did so many women attend the Women's Gathering?
- Why did non-WMS members attend the Women's Gathering?
- Could the WMS change to involve these women?
- What does the WMS do differently from Presbyterian Sharing and PWS&D?

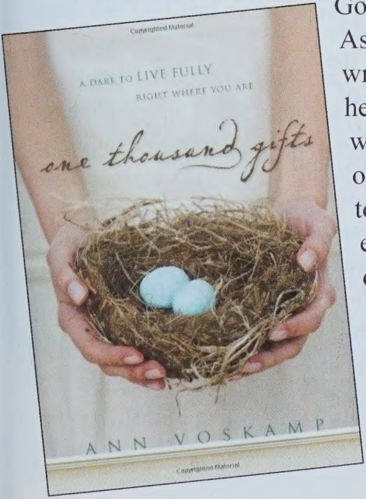
After answering these questions, the task force will make recommendations on the future of the WMS.

One Thousand Gifts: A Dare to Live Fully Right Where You Are

Written by Ann Voskamp
Reviewed by Mary Beth McLean

One Thousand Gifts tells the story of the author's journey out of the darkness of melancholy into the light of God's grace, where she is sustained by a new-found gratitude to God in all circumstances. The book begins with a jolt, an account of tragedy on her family's farm near Waterloo, Ontario. Ann recalls the year she turned four as the year her family 'snapped shut to grace'. And that's the way she lived into the early years of her marriage to her farmer husband and through the birth of their six children.

By God's grace, Ann's life was transformed when a friend challenged her to write a list of a thousand things she loved—one thousand gifts from God. As she wrote, her eyes were opened to the every day gifts around her, like hot oatmeal tasting like home, moonlight on pillows, and the perspective of a child.



This book is not a trite pep-talk about counting your blessings. Ann is very candid about her own struggles to persevere in the discipline of giving thanks. She shares in such an open and honest way that the reader also becomes engaged in the challenge to live a life of deeper gratitude to and intimacy with God—and to experience the joy that comes from it.

Ann Voskamp is a thoughtful, well-read, Canadian writer with a deep Christian faith. Along with her personal reflections on select scripture passages, she draws on the writings of such authors as Augustine, Martin Luther, C.S. Lewis, Henri Nouwen, and Annie Dillard. Her book is written with a poet's touch yet has practical application. It is experiential, encouraging the reader to put into practice daily, moment-by-moment thanksgiving to God that we might be awakened to God's love for each of us.

One Thousand Gifts has been a wonderful gift to me. I highly recommend it for anyone who longs to be refreshed in their faith or to grow in deeper intimacy with God. It is a book that can be read independently or discussed in a book club. It's definitely a book to be shared with others. What would happen if women in the WMS and their friends took up the challenge to "dare to live fully right where you are?" I'm certain that not only individual lives would be changed, but there would be a positive impact on our families, congregations and communities.

A New Kind of Christianity
Written by Brian D. McLaren

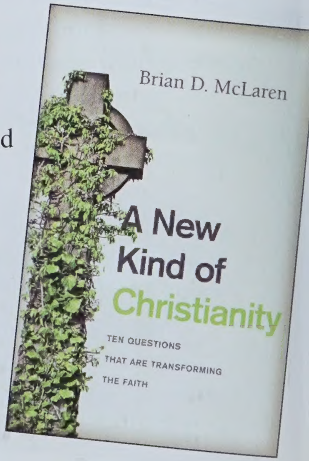
A New Kind of Christianity—10 Questions that are Transforming the Faith, continues McLaren's work with the Emerging Church. McLaren is good at responding to questions, not offering answers. I like how this book gives some of McLaren's history, talking of his move into this new kind of thinking and living. He also admits to not being alone, listing others that are making this transition.

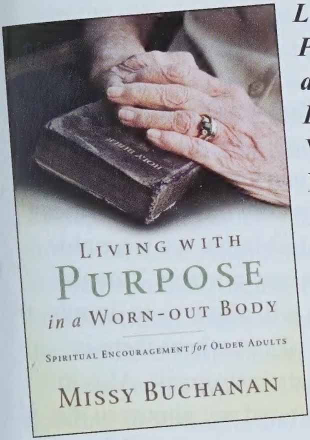
In this transition, McLaren suggests ten questions that keep coming up. He thinks that talking about questions is what is needed, to "weaken old, rigid paradigms and to help us imagine new and better possibilities." The questions are:

1. What is the overarching story line of the Bible?
2. How should the Bible be understood?
3. Is God violent?
4. Who is Jesus and why is He important?
5. What is the Gospel?
6. What do we do about the Church?
7. Can we find a way to address human sexuality without fighting about it?
8. Can we find a better way of viewing the future?
9. How should followers of Jesus relate to people of other religions?
10. How do we translate our quest into action?

Are his answers controversial? Yes. Some will be offended, often because they will think he does not take the answer far enough or perhaps because he does not give easily defined answers. Also, he does tend to be very hard on the mainline, and evangelical church. However, I do believe there is certainly value in asking these questions. Sometimes we are scared to question, in the words of McLaren, "for fear that we'll slip down into liberalism."

This book is far from perfect, either loved and loathed by critics, but can engage readers to continue to learn, and to re-affirm their beliefs, or perhaps, through the guiding of God, the scriptures, and theologians, to be open to some transformation. Remember, we are the reformed, and reforming.


Brian D. McLaren
A New Kind of Christianity
TEN QUESTIONS THAT ARE TRANSFORMING THE FAITH



Living With Purpose in a Worn-Out Body

Written by Missy Buchanan

I first heard about *Living With Purpose in a Worn-Out Body, A Spiritual Encouragement for Older Adults*, at Hamilton Presbyterial's Fall Rally, where it was reviewed. I immediately knew I wanted to review it for *Glad Tidings*. The first thing that appealed to me in this book was the format. It is written in large print, great for those elderly individuals who might be suffering some vision loss. The book consists of a variety of meditations, followed by two brief scripture passages, one from the Old and one from the New Testament.

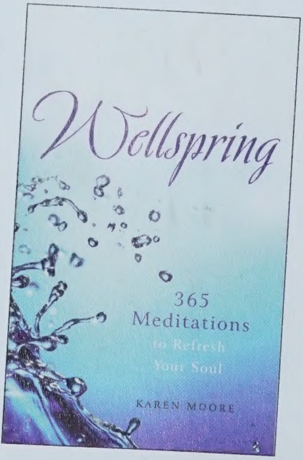
I really like this book and would suggest it for those, who perhaps, feel like they have outlived their usefulness. I know that my Father, even when his health was deteriorating, wanted to serve others, but got discouraged as his ability to serve was failing. These small reflections might have served as a reminder, that God can use us, frail in body, mind, even soul. I also like it because many elderly individuals are not able to get out to a worship service. For those, many of the reflections are just a reminder that life does not always give us what we want (oxygen tubes, institutional living), but that we have the promise of eternal life. I think that this book will provide comfort for many as they face their current afflictions and the reality that they will soon be in the arms of God.

Wellspring—365 Meditations to Refresh Your Soul

Written by Karen Moore

This devotional book, like many, includes a Bible verse, personal reflection, and a short prayer. I found this book to be a great devotional book for those who want a daily short reflection. Often the reflections tie in very closely to the Bible reading, which is great, though I often suggest grabbing your Bible to read a larger passage than just the one verse suggested.

This is one of many devotional books that The Book Room has to offer. To find the one that is right for you, give them a call, as they are happy to help.

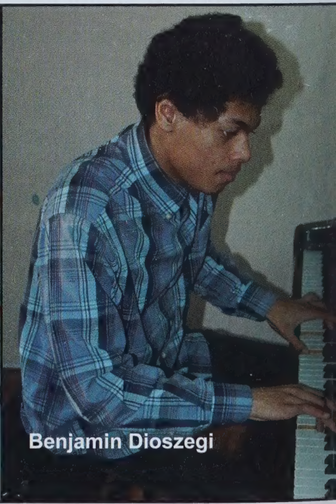


Brian Johnston
Protestant Theological Seminary
Cluj, Romania

My work as a lay missionary in Romania is continuing well. In October, we welcomed many new students and I was able to add four new choir members. My choir has 18 members, but we often perform in smaller places with fewer numbers. In May of this year, in our big concert, we sang together with the esteemed Hungarian Reformed High School Choir from Cluj. A highlight of the concert was pianist Benjamin Dioszegi from the special music high school. He is now continuing his studies in Budapest at the Bartok Conservatory. Benjamin, coming from a family with severe economic hardships, was helped financially through "Share the Gift of Music in Romania" from the PCC Gifts of Change. Many Canadians continue to contribute to this fund which supports my musical activities in Romania. In March, we were able to purchase a new portable Yamaha piano, which will allow us to do mission work in places where there is not an adequate instrument. Also in March, I exhibited my photos in the Apaczai High School where I first started teaching back in 1993.

In July of this year, I was honoured with an invitation to the Kodaly Institute in Kecskemet, Hungary, to show my photo exhibition—Romanian Reflections. This was part of a festival of art, which took place at the same time as the summer music courses, which has a large number of international participants. Kecskemet

The Yamaha piano's first performance.


Benjamin Dioszegi

was the place where I started my "Hungarian" adventure back in 1982 when I was given a sabbatical to study the Kodaly System of Music Education. At that time, I never dreamed that I would be returning 29 years later to exhibit photos from Romania. After returning to Romania in late August, I travelled to Bilea Lake, which is located in the Southern Carpathians.

Last year, I reported on the flooding in Romania and this year there have been extreme droughts in many areas. In some cases, where the wells have dried up, water had to be transported from other spots. One of the villages is Kide, which has not had a drop of rain in over two months. A group of 12 ladies from the WMS visited Nagy Tibor and Erika there in October of 2008. They have also had two visits from Korean Canadians in the last few years.

Overseas Staff Birthdays

January

5 – Aron Pandy-Szekeres, Hungary
6 – Anna Pandy-Szekeres, Hungary
10 – David Pandy-Szekeres, Hungary

February

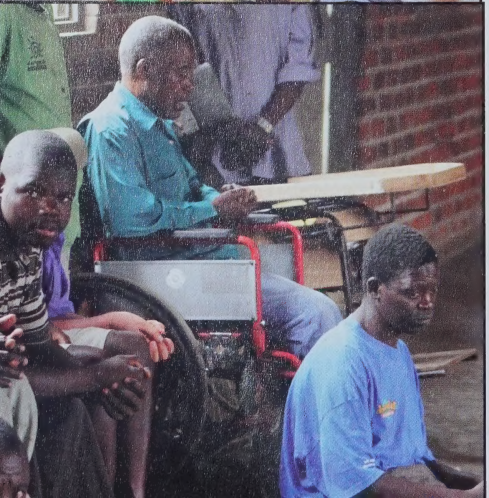
21 – Bill McKelvie, Pakistan
21 – Sophia Statham, Malawi

Thanks as always to all of you in Canada, who continue to inspire and support me either through your congregation or individually.

Debbie Burns
Malawi

Tidzalerana, which is Chichewa for 'we care for one another', has been operating since the early 1980s.

Korean Canadians in Kide



For the first 20 years, it operated solely as the Tidzalerana Club, but in April 2010, the Tidzalerana Shelter was opened. Now the two distinct, yet connected, programs are overseen by an active Board of Directors, and Linda Inglis (PCC) and I (Debbie) are currently board members.

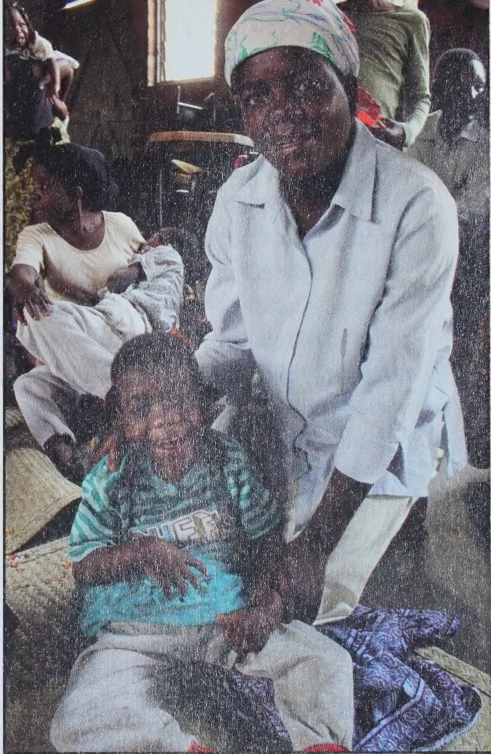
In the early 1980s, a woman from Great Britain came to Malawi with some money to help people living with disabilities. She met with Linda Inglis, who was appointed to Malawi through The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC), and a few other women to discuss what they could do. They connected with the priest at Holy Ghost Catholic Church in Ndirande Township in Blantyre, Malawi, and were able to secure free space in the church hall to bring people living with disabilities together to meet, talk, and support one another. This is how the Tidzalerana Club got started.

"The Club," as it is fondly referred to, meets every Tuesday and is still held in the church hall at Holy Ghost Catholic Church. Our time together begins with one of the female members leading us in Chichewa praise songs, and then we have time for prayer, a scripture reading, and a short sermon. This is usually led by an elder from St. Michael and All Angels CCAP church. Following this, the group splits into various activities. Some women and men work at income-generating activities, such as sewing and knitting projects, while others work on woodworking projects.

Most children in Malawi must wear school uniforms, which are often unaffordable, especially for families who have a disabled person, so one of the men has been making school uniforms for these children. He is also teaching others how to sew using the hand-operated sewing machine that belongs to the Club. Many of the children with disabilities, able-bodied siblings of a child with a disability, and children of a parent with a disability take part in a craft or play soccer. Children with disabilities are also given a chance to have some exercises to help ease the pain or to stretch their muscles. Various physiotherapists and other medical personnel have donated their time over the years to teach volunteers on how to safely help with these exercises.

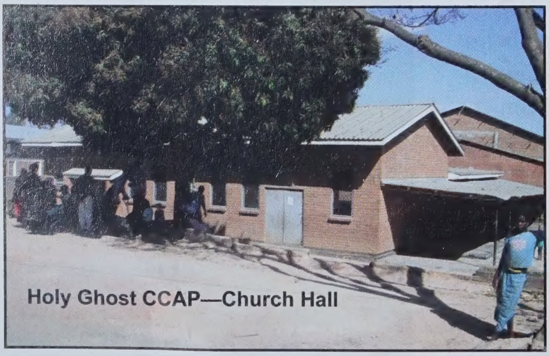
Every week, the caregivers and their children are given sandwiches, roasted groundnuts, and a cup of tea as they sit together and provide encouragement to one another. When there are funds available, people are given money for transportation to hospitals and clinics so they can receive physiotherapy and other services. Also, through donations of money, we have been able to help them access wheelchairs, special chairs, and standing frames built to assist them in daily living, provide healing from their conditions, and give them back some mobility

The Tidzalerana Shelter opened in April 2010. It provides a safe, caring home environment for people living with physical and/or mental disabilities, as well as a few children, who have a



parent with a disability. There are 13 resident rooms as well as a place on site for the manager to stay. The residents are provided with three healthy meals per day, which are cooked by staff in a full-service kitchen. There is a large common room in which they eat all of their meals together and participate in various social, worship, income-generating, and leisure activities.

While all of the people we work with through Tidzalerana face multiple difficulties, there are also many success stories. I will share a few with you. When we arrived in Malawi in February 2011, a 2 ½-year-old boy with Down's Syndrome and his mother were introduced to us. He was unable to walk and required a lot of attention from her. When we see him now at the Club, he is cheerful and walking well. This is all due to the exercises and activities he has had at the Club, along with the skills and encouragement his mother was given and used at home with him. His mother hopes to have him start nursery school soon.



Holy Ghost CCAP—Church Hall

In June, I met with a mother and her five-year-old daughter. She said they had been coming to the Club for three years. Her daughter had been born with jaundice, which caused some problems in her brain and difficulty in walking. Through the Club, she got connected with Feed the Children, which built her a standing frame—paid for by the Club—and provided ongoing physiotherapy for her. She said that coming to the Club provided her with support from the other mothers. That helped her remain hopeful about her daughter's progress and the worship service gave comfort to her. She asked if the Club could help her purchase a new standing frame for her daughter as she had outgrown the other one. I asked her to approach us again in a few months as we did not have the funds at that time. When I met with her on Tuesday, she was smiling and said her daughter was walking so well now, she did not need the new standing frame.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) provides funding to Tidzalerana. Your direct donations to Presbyterian World Service and Development (PWS&D) or through their Gifts of Change program, "Empower People With Disabilities," help those living with disabilities in various parts of the world, including Tidzalerana in Malawi.

The WMS ... Did you Know?

Many years ago, International Ministries began a very successful ministry—sending knitted pneumonia vests overseas to assist preemies in their early days and months. In November 2003, the WMS Synodicals took over the project of sending these vests and other knitted items.

The project was a good one. Mrs. Miriam Barrie, who served as a volunteer in Malawi for many years, brought this project to the church's attention. These vests were intended for babies born at or admitted to the hospitals of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in Malawi and the Church of North India. Some months of the year can be quite cold in Malawi and India, and doctors who have worked in hospitals there tell us that keeping a baby's back and chest warm is a vital factor in preventing respiratory infection from developing into possibly fatal pneumonia.

And for many years, the WMS, and others, embraced this project. Your commitment and love to serving others was apparent. Over the years, many have contributed their time, talent, and prayers giving preemie babies overseas a great warm start.

Recently, the WMS became concerned about this project when it learned that work had been taken away from Malawian women because so many knitted items were being received (we are not the only organization involved). Prior to our involvement, the local women knitted and provided knitted goods for the hospitals. In India, we also found that many of the vests were too large for preemies and were being used by older children and some adults. As well, the mailing costs for this ministry are extremely high. So, we needed to carefully evaluate this ministry.

After some thoughtful consideration, the Council Executive has decided that 2012 will be the last year to receive funds for mailing pneumonia vests to India. For Malawi, if groups decide to continue sending items, it will be at their own cost. We do acknowledge that many have been helped because WMS members and other individuals embraced this ministry and thank everyone for their work and prayerful knitting.

For those groups who want to continue knitting, there are many other projects closer to home. To eliminate any extra cost surrounding any knitting project, we suggest you look at your own community to see where your group can help. The following are some suggestions from other WMS groups:

- Prayer shawls for your congregation, nursing homes, or hospitals

- Hats, mittens, socks, and scarves for food banks, schools, and homeless shelters in adult, children, and baby sizes
- Washcloths for camps, shelters, and your church
- Lap blankets for hospitals and nursing homes
- Blankets for animal shelters, women's shelters, and homeless shelters
- Contact your local hospital to see if they have any needs like Chemo caps, blankets, and hats for preemies
- Knitted dolls for women's shelters or children's hospitals

As we move ahead, know that we will continue to uphold those in Malawi and India in our prayers, and we will consider specific projects that might allow us to continue to participate with them.

Forward in Faith

Thank you to all of you who worked to meet your Presbyterial financial goal in 2011.

I know it can sometimes be a struggle. In my Presbyterial, we are finding that we have fewer people each year, but those who continue contribute substantially.

May I remind all our treasurers that now that you have completed your year-end, you are able to submit your report (T3010-1: Registered Charity Information Return) to the Canada Revenue Agency. I know it is not due until June 30, but you have all the information required to complete it NOW! If for any reason your group, Presbyterial, or Synodical is no longer issuing tax receipts, you must file your final T3010 to close your Canada Revenue Agency account properly.

Now, it is goal-setting time! Your Group and Presbyterial will be working on this. Plans for your annual meetings will be taking place. It is difficult to know what goals should be set—financially and for your group activities. I am always amazed to hear the ideas and realize the energy that WMS women have.

I wish you all the very best in the work you are planning and in your financial goal-setting. Please know it is very much appreciated!

Janet Brewer

In the Society

Synodical

The **Synodical of Quebec and Eastern Ontario** held its Fall Rally on Tuesday, September 27, at Osgoode Presbyterian Church in Vernon, Ontario. After registration and coffee, the Rev. Dan Gunther gave a warm welcome and shared a brief history of the church. President Joan Hilliard led devotions based on the theme, Seasons of Change. Several ladies shared their reflections from the Presbyterian Women's Gathering. Every memory was positive—the workshops, fabulous food, the worship services, the inspiring speakers, the singing leaders, and the happy African offering. This was followed with Anita Mack leading a Bible Study on obedience to God.

David Pándy-Szekeres, our afternoon speaker, showed a PowerPoint presentation illustrating his work with the Reformed Church of Sub-Carpathian Ukraine. We closed with singing, Great is Thy Faithfulness, and prayer.

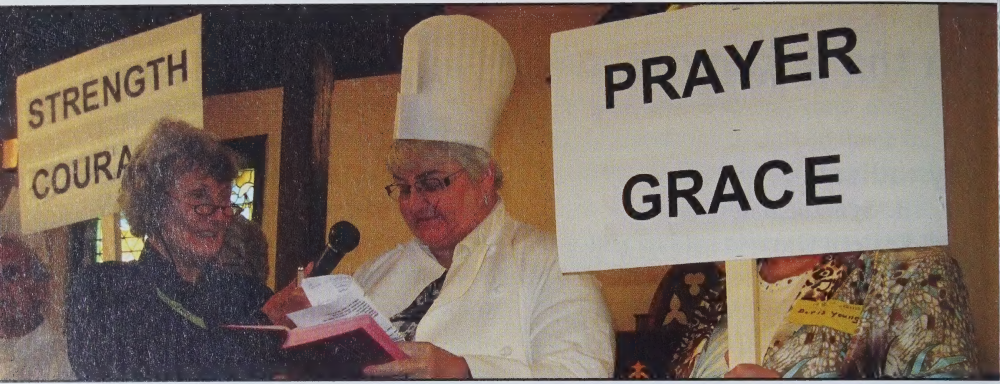
Presbyterial

Women who wanted to hear what "LOOK IN–SHOUT OUT" was all about, came to the **Westminster Presbyterial** Fall Rally held at Calvin Church, Abbotsford, on September 14. There were 32 women present.

The Rev. Blair Bertrand, Calvin Church's new minister, led devotions, reminding us that God's kingdom is built brick by brick. Yes, the WMS knows about "bricks!" The WMS often contributes to buildings or their needs, and today's offering was sent to the Mulanje Mission Hospital in Malawi towards the cost of a hospital bed.

After a short business meeting, followed by a yoga stretch to the Lord's Prayer, three women who had been at the Presbyterian Women's Gathering in May spoke about their experiences there. Comments were mostly very favourable and whetted the appetites of some others to attend the next gathering.

After lunch, the Rev. Mary Fontaine, Director of Hummingbird Ministries, a mission outreach of the Presbytery of Westminster to First Nation's people in the greater Vancouver area, spoke. Mary is the first indigenous woman to be elected to the Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, which met in Geneva in May. For those of us who know very little about the WCRC, it was interesting to learn that the organization represents 230 churches in 108 countries and works in areas, such as unity and justice, church leadership development, action in climate change, women's rights, inter-faith



understanding, and greater connections among churches.

More than 50 women gathered in Swinton Park on September 15 to shop at Heaven's Grocery Store, in keeping with the theme for **Bruce-Grey Presbyterial** Fall Rally—A Banquet for Your Spirit.

During the Roll Call, members brought food items for the Dundalk Food Bank to the front of the church. Paisley led the worship service, giving us lessons—joy, strength, success, comfort, kindness, protection, love—for our homes. Since we are here to enjoy soul food (God's word), we were asked if we get excited about the flavour, aroma, and taste of God's word. We need to devour the word of God.

During a delicious lunch, provided by the Swinton Park group, we were encouraged to write a message and put it in the balloon that was provided at each place. We released the balloons at the end of the meeting, and as it was a windy day, they quickly disappeared. I wonder if anyone found our messages.

After lunch, we formed six groups: love/patience, wisdom/faith, strength/courage, prayer/grace, peace/joy, and praises/song. We looked up scripture passages containing these words, which were then read by

our chefs, wearing chef coats and hats. Following this, Joan Davidson sang Heaven is in my Heart, and the Swinton Park group entertained us with a skit.

Carolyn Reid, Leamington, Muriel McLaughlin, Dresden, Marg. Bushman, Leamington, Mary McKay, Leamington, Joyce McTavish, Dresden, Jennie Atherton, Dresden

Six ladies from **Essex-Kent Presbyterial** travelled through traffic to learn about the mission work being done at Evangel Hall in Toronto. When we arrived, Paula Aceto, the Resource Manager, welcomed us. There were men who unloaded our cars and took all our 'stuff' into the building. We brought tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, and green and yellow beans that were donated from the roadside stand where I always get my veggies, and a flat of tomatoes, from a friend. We also took tooth brushes and toothpaste, shampoo, and hand cream. The Dresden ladies brought numerous canned goods and a lady from Ridgetown donated bags of clothing and four quilts for us to bring.

We were taken to a lovely room off the roof-top patio where we could see the CN Tower, and there we were served a beautiful lunch of chicken, rice and mushrooms, egg salad, carrot strips, and yellow beans. Such a nice presentation by their fantastic cook, Emil!

Then we had a tour that included geared-to-income housing, their dental clinic and vision centre, spiritual care work, a youth room with a row of computers, and a clothing room where a person can take what is needed and have access to the washing machines. There is also an out-of-the-cold ministry offered in partnership with other mission organizations during the winter months. It was such a comfort to know that people in need were being helped. We were truly blessed to have this day and to learn about the Mission at Evangel Hall.

The **Niagara Presbyterial** Fall Rally, was hosted by the WMS group at Knox, Welland, on September 28. Thirty–two members and one Scottish guest attended.

Margaret Rolls of the Beamsville Auxiliary conducted the opening worship, setting the stage for Mary Lou Johnson's recounting of her trip

Mary Simmons presenting her Mom, June Simmons with an Honourary Membership Award.

to Palestine by reading the Genesis stories of the birth of Ishmael and Isaac.

Mary Lou's trip, was organized by the PCC and inspired by the document put out by Palestinian Christians entitled, A Moment of Truth. This document is an appeal to the rest of the world to hear their cry from the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Gaza.

Mary Lou began with an excellent slide presentation of the many tourist attractions in The Holy Land, places sacred to Muslims, Christians and Jews. Tourism is a great source of revenue for the Israeli Government.

She then showed pictures of the Israeli settlements dotted all over the West Bank including one set in the middle of the Palestinian city of Hebron. We saw a picture of garbage thrown down on the Palestinian market by settlers and learned of the many frustrations and indignities caused to the Palestinians. We also saw a picture of two young Canadians who act as Ecumenical accompaniers to enable Arabs to get from their homes to work in their olive groves from which they are often separated by check points, walls, and settlements. The government of Israel continues to violate the rights of the Palestinians, unmoved by criticism from International and Jewish human rights groups.

Hazel McGraw

Winds of Change, was the theme when **Maitland Presbyterial** met at Melville Presbyterian Church in Brussels. There was a warm time of fellowship with delicious desserts prepared by the Brussels group.

Linda Shaw, our guest speaker, spoke of her mission ministry in Guyana along with her husband, the Rev. Ian Shaw. She emphasized that we all have a story to tell. We must tell our children and grandchildren about the love of God. The Presbyterian Church in Canada established the first Guyana Church and started schools called Canadian Mission Schools over 130 years ago.

Betty Johnson and Janet Nixon from Ripley led the worship service. In the winds of change, God is our shelter and refuge. Take comfort; we are not in charge—God is. In other news, Mary Simmons presented an Honourary Membership to her mother, June Simmons.

Brockville Presbyterial met on September 29 at St. Andrew's/Knox Spencerville. The day's theme, Living the Story, was based on Philippians 4:1–9, and the Joy of Serving, was presented in word and song.

President Catherine Blatch introduced the Rev. Dr. David Pándy-Szekeres. David serves as a missionary in Eastern Europe, working with the ethnic Hungarian community through the Reformed Church of Sub-Carpathian Ukraine. He is very active in work with the Roma community of Nagybereg, working to improve their poor quality of life. David and his family are currently in Canada on a year's furlough.

Local

A prayer shawl ministry was begun at **St. Andrews-Chalmers Presbyterian Church in Uxbridge**, Ontario, in 2009. The ministry began at a WMS meeting, under the inspiration of our treasurer, Margaret Sword. The women of our church have been knitting prayer shawls for members and friends of St. Andrews-Chalmers, and the spirit and intention behind the gift is what elevates the shawl to that other level of meaning, for both the knitter and the person who receives the shawl.

As the knitters begin they pray that the shawl will become a tangible sign of God's presence and blessing for someone in need.

Shawls have been distributed to persons who are seriously ill or terminally ill, and to shut-ins and residents of nursing homes. One was given to celebrate a 65th wedding anniversary. Also, a few of the shawls were sent to the Boarding Homes Ministry in 2011.

-Phyllis Davis
(from Elizabeth Convery)

Women of **Knox Presbyterian, Bobcaygeon**, take to heart the Canadian slogan, Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. Each Wednesday, they meet in the church hall to reuse and recycle for mission. Knox Frocks started this summer to repurpose pillowcases into dresses and scraps of material into shorts. So far, this group has made over 60 pillowcase dresses and 15 pairs of boys shorts, which are finding

their way to Ghana and Sri Lanka, enthusiastically hand delivered by volunteers. More may be delivered to Mexico this winter. This group was just going to meet for a day, but then there was more to do. Then, they were going to meet during August, but still more donations came in. Now, they will continue for the time being as long as there are pillowcases and material to sew.

Also meeting on Wednesdays is the Milk Bag Mats Crocheting group. They take milk bags, cut them, and crochet them into sleeping mats and kneeling mats. To make one sleeping mat takes 100 milk bags. They started in June 2010 and by May 2011 the group had completed 19 mats in two sizes and 11 kneelers. They were delivered to a woman in Lindsay, where a truck picks them up from there to be shipped to Haiti and other needy countries.

Each of these ministries demonstrates the body of Christ working together, some bring milk bags, some cut, and some crochet. Some bring pillow cases and material, some cut, some accessorize, and some sew the dresses and shorts. There is a place for anyone who wants to be involved.

Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me. Matthew 25:45

Pass Me Along

Please help to promote *Glad Tidings* and the work of the WMS. When you have finished reading your copy, encourage:

A traveler to read, *The Holy Land* (p. 8)

Your minister to read, *From Racism to Reconciliation* (p. 13)

Your church librarian to read, *Reviews* (p.31)

Glad Tidings
January/February 2012

In Remembrance

Iva Bush
Beverley Campbell
Dorothy Crawford
Margaret Grant
Ina McElheran
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church,
Avonmore ON

Mrs. Margaret McLeod
Mrs. Helen Scott
St. Andrew's (Hespeler) Presbyterian Church,
Cambridge ON

Elizabeth Lummiff
Knox Presbyterian Church
Women, WMS,
Cannington ON

Ileen Powell
Joyce Strathearn
Knox, Midland ON

Christine (Chris) Boaz
Lorna Holloway
Margaret (Madge) Roberton
Helen Young Auxiliary,
Paris Presbyterian, Paris ON

Gwen Campbell
Grace Limbert
Trinity Presbyterian Church, York Mills,
Toronto ON

Marion Esler
First Presbyterian Church,
Port Colborne ON

The Rev. Dr. Irene Dickson
First Presbyterian Afternoon Auxiliary,
Winnipeg MB

Miss Beatrice Nash
Mrs. Isabelle Adam Schepp
Mrs. Florence Sinclair
St. James Presbyterian Church WMS Auxiliary,
Winnipeg MB

Circulation News

A special 'thank you' to all our *Glad Tidings* secretaries/contact people. We appreciate the effort you make to collect subscriptions each year for *Glad Tidings*! And, we know your work doesn't end in November. If someone wishes to subscribe during the year, we know you often are the person who sends in the subscription (though individual subscribers can always send it in directly).

Many of you have returned your group subscriptions lists for 2012, and for that we are grateful. Hopefully by the time this issue comes out, all of these will have been received. Just a reminder, if your group has disbanded, we still need to receive the list of subscribers so be certain that it gets returned too.

Individual subscribers also deserve thanks for returning their subscription forms! Whether you are a member of a WMS group, or are just interested in mission, we thank you for subscribing to *Glad Tidings*. For those who haven't returned your forms, it is not too late. Actually, it's never too late. Although the regular subscription period is January-December, you can subscribe to *Glad Tidings* at any point during the year.

Katherine Allen

Whoever said, "You can't have your cake and eat it too," never heard of Gift Annuities

Gift Annuities are a way you can make a gift to the church to support the ministry of your choice and in return receive a guaranteed annual income for life, the majority or all of the income tax-free. Sound too good to be true? Call the Planned Giving Office today to learn how you can have your cake and eat it too.

What flavour of ministry would you like to support?

A real life example:

In 1994, Giollo Kelly acquired a $10,000 gift annuity which she designated for the Presbyterian Church Building Corporation. When she died fifteen years later, Giollo had received nearly $11,000 (87% tax-free) in total payments and left a legacy of nearly $7,500 with the money remaining in her annuity account.

(The above example is for illustrative purposes only. Annuity rates and the residue available for disbursement vary.)

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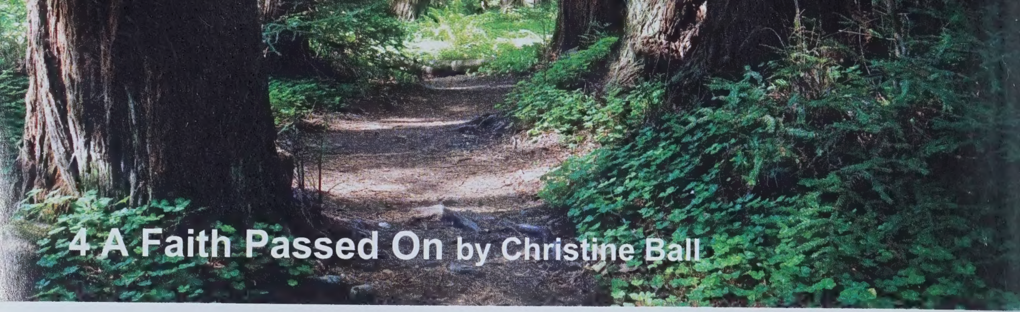

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Glad Tidings

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Canada

Glad Tidings reports on aspects of the Women's Missionary Society on all levels. *Glad Tidings* challenges concerned Christians to reflect on their faith through articles and reports related to mission and social justice issues, locally, nationally, and internationally. *Glad Tidings* through its content, encourages readers to become informed, educated, inspired, and motivated to action. *GladTidings* provides a forum for a broad spectrum of opinion and information, thus the views expressed in features, news reports, letters, and book reviews are not necessarily endorsed by the WMS or by the Editor.

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Editorial

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—(Ephesians 2:8)

I love how *Living Faith* starts their section on faith: "Faith is a gift from God." I truly believe this, because like many of you, I have trusted since childhood. Before I could articulate any creeds, or could understand the theology behind the songs I was singing, I showed trust in God. Before I could read the stories of Jesus, I believed in his love. Being raised by Christian parents, I was given an immense gift—to see faith lived out in the daily routine of life. The love of Christian parents taught me faith and trust from the moment I was born. Being baptised as an infant, I became part of a Christian community beyond my immediate family. This family nurtured my faith in worship and friendship over the years.

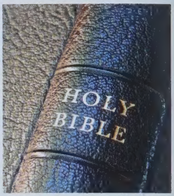
Yes, I did have some spiritual struggles, especially as a young adult, but I came back to my faith stronger from this time.

This edition of *Glad Tidings*, contains stories of faith. Women, of all ages, share their stories with you. Through their stories, I pray you will be inspired. But I hope you will not leave it there. I hope you will use it as an opportunity to reflect on your own faith journey. How long have you been travelling with God? When has your faith flourished and grown, and when has it needed a boost? Perhaps, you will be inspired to write your own story to share with others, or to just cherish yourself. You might even try your hand at creating your faith timeline (p.20).

My prayer this month is that our Easter worship service will nurture your faith. Whether you read it on your own, or participate in it with your WMS group, may the words inspire you as you remember the death and resurrection of Jesus. As *Living Faith* states, "His resurrection means that our faith is not empty, that final victory is assured over all evil powers which destroy and deform life, and that death, the last enemy, is conquered." Hallelujah!

For the promise is for you and your children ...

Acts 2:39



A Faith Passed On

by Christine Ball

I had the good fortune of growing up in a Christian home. Perhaps, you might suggest that I have been blessed. I certainly feel that way. My parents lived, talked, and modelled their faith. As children we witnessed a spiritual journey, with God being an active companion. Trust in God was based on their personal experience of a caring and loving God and that relationship was founded on prayer.

My personal relationship with

God was nourished and fed by my family as well as several church communities. When I reflect on my faith journey, I might picture it as a canoe trip along a prairie river, meandering slowly across fertile fields. The sky is spectacular, but there are few dramatic waterfalls and few portages. It may be unremarkable, but as the one travelling along, it feels blessed by God and a joy to experience.

If you grew up with the common catechism, you might remember the first question.

Question 1: What is the chief and highest end of man?

Answer: Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever.

I prefer the "Catechism for Today."

Question 1: What is God's purpose for our lives?

Answer: We have been made for joy: joy in knowing, loving and serving God, joy in knowing, loving and serving one another, joy in the wonder of all God's works.

It is not like I felt joy all the time. Certainly not. In fact, I am a bit of a worrier and can imagine many obstacles awaiting me. I remember as a teenager dragging myself out of bed for early morning school band or sports practices to find my father sitting at the kitchen table reading the Bible while he ate his breakfast. He would greet me with: "This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. Rejoice!" I would think, "Are you kidding ...?" Joy may not be the first word that I think of to describe my day, but as I reach the fifty-year milestone it is certainly an apt description of my relationship with God.

It is a "Joy" that comes not as an emotional high, but as a result of knowing and serving God. It is the joy of recognizing God at work in the little, everyday things, as well as the big things. It is the joy in the wonder of sunrises and sunsets that give me a shiver of pleasure and an awareness of the beauty of God's creation. It is the joy which comes in serving, teaching Sunday school, or offering hospitality. Joy is having purpose in life and joy is knowing others who share our love of God and our sense of mission and calling.

I am also grateful to God for the church communities that shaped my understanding of God. My Presbyterian roots instilled a respect for God as Sovereign—God omnipotent. I have always had confidence that God is in control. God is at work in the world.

As a youth, such a large, all-powerful God brought comfort. Such a God could accept my questions, not being troubled by them, and I had many. You see my Sunday experience was Presbyterian, but my week day experience of youth group and Pioneer Girls was Baptist. I experienced the Sovereign God of

my Sundays as my personal weekday friend, Jesus; Jesus, who understood my doubts and human failings; Jesus, who cared about the little things. If ever I had a faith challenge it would have to be in the fitting of these two contrasting faces of God together. I liked the verse from Matthew 10, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." The omnipotent and omniscient God of all creation is also the God who cares enough to know the number of hairs on my head!

Prayer has also been a personal challenge. Perhaps it is my short attention span, but most likely it is my tendency to be sceptical and my preference for trusting in my own strength and abilities. I do believe in miracles and I believe God does answer prayer. If my childhood family had a motto it would have been, "Just pray!" I remember many a family beach picnic, the weather forecast was for rain, all day, and yet my family seemed undeterred. We would pack up the car as it rained, with our picnic basket, bathing-suits, and blankets, and drive for two hours to the beach. If I pointed out that it was raining they would simply say, "Pray for sunshine." I often felt like I was the only sceptic in the car. When we arrived at the beach, sure enough the clouds would part and we would have a glorious sun-filled day. As evening came in and the clouds began to build, we would pack up the car and drive home.

One of my most profound encounters with God and faith happened when I was a moody 16-year-old. With traditional family optimism, my sister, brother-in-law, and I ventured out on a day-long hike to climb a mountain on Canada's West Coast—in the rain. When I pointed out that there seemed little gratification in climbing a mountain when there would be no hope of our efforts being rewarded with a mountain top view, their response was ... you guessed it, "Just Pray!"

I am not sure if I prayed on the way up that mountain. I know I struggled with the whole idea of creator, sovereign God ... so big, so removed, caring for me. Why would God hear my prayers and provide sunshine for me and not answer the prayers of the farmers in the valley below for rain? By simply praying, would I not be attempting to manipulate God?

We hiked through the rain, up the slippery slopes, eventually passing through the fog and clouds and sure enough, the sun was shining above the clouds. Yet, there was still no view of the valley below. As we laid out our lunch and offered our thanks, a strange thing happened. On the horizon, I noticed a dark patch, a hole in the cloud. The clouds literally cracked and parted (in Red Sea fashion) into a pie shape triangle centred at our feet. A magnificent sunlit view of the valley was opened before our very eyes.

We literally jumped up and down with excitement, our tired limbs forgotten. This was the answer to my sister's prayers. Then as if God wanted to impress me even further, me—the tired, grumpy teenage sceptic—the wedge of God's sunshine began to move around the mountain and as we ran around the top of the summit we witnessed the splendour of the whole region. As we arrived back at the picnic site, the clouds closed up.

I am very grateful for this joy-filled faith inherited from my family. The family is indeed the best place to be nurtured. No other place is more fraught with spiritual material than the family home. Just as my parents modelled, equipped, and guided me, my husband and I have tried to do the same with our children as they grew. We have journeyed together across mountain tops and through valleys. Together we have marvelled at the wonders of our mighty God's creation on camping trips. We have served together in many a ministry setting, and we continued the family tradition of setting out on canoe trips even when rain was forecast. We prayed for the rain to stop and sometimes it did. The fact was that we set out on family trips and adventures knowing we were surrounded by the prayer of generations—grandparents. Sometimes it might have been hectic or a bit messy, but I hope and pray that our now adult children have and will continue to experience for themselves this blessed inheritance of faith, commitment to prayer, willingness to place ourselves in God's hands, and the joy of knowing, loving, and serving God.

For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

Psalm 100:5

God works hard for each and everyone and loves them, but I think sometimes he gets a bit mad for some of the bad stuff we do, but forgives us after.

God is very important to me and loves me. He makes a huge difference in my life by loving me and caring for me. I listen in church; and I go to Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. I learned a lot about God's love and peace.

God's Love and Peace

by Heather Duncan, age 9

I have been going to my church for 11 years. I was baptised there by my grandmother (a retired minister), and my family attends regularly. My faith has been built by my family and my church, and wavered by media and doubts. At 11 years old, I have a lot to think about at church.

I believe that God does exist and that he is sort of like a mist. He flows all around me, emitting comfort and wisdom. God is a man who shaped our world and he deserves almighty respect. I try my hardest to be a good person. I think that I am a Good Samaritan, but I am not sure. Going to school now is much different than going to school 50 years ago. There are so many different religions, and so many different opinions. We like to express our opinions and share our traditions. Some traditions are really cool, but different than mine.

The media has also changed my thoughts. Watching television shows made me think in a new ways. It has made me careless and selfish. However, these thoughts have changed as I read some really awesome Bible stories. My favourites are the stories that Jesus told crowds of people in the New Testament. My beliefs in God are strained in many ways, but they are strengthened too and I always know that God is watching me and smiling over me.

God influences people in many different ways. He can be a guide; a keeper; or a shepherd. To me, he is like a diary. He is there for me when I need him most. I can talk to him regularly and I can talk to him normally. He is a patient person, and doesn't interrupt me for anything in the world.

God is mine. I love him very much, like my Dad. I think that God is like my personal God. I find it hard to comprehend that he is everywhere, all the time, and that he still has time to answer everyone's prayers all at once! I know that one day I will comprehend this, but for now I just can't.

My church is a well structured church with good people and amazing ministers, and I like Sunday school now. The teachers are friendly and willing to lend an ear. I really like the services, because I can understand them.

Finally, as a girl of faith, I believe that God is always there for me when I need him, and he never leaves me.

God is with Me

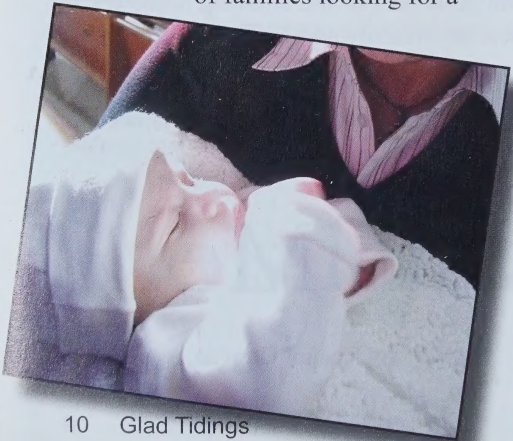
by Rachel Duncan, age 11 ½

Passing on the Faith

by Colleen Wood

The greatest influence on a child's faith is their mother, followed closely by their father. Surprisingly, this continues on even throughout the adolescent years, when we think children are no longer watching us, or choosing to do the exact opposite of what we do or suggest! Now, for those who are grandparents, or close family friends, don't be discouraged, because you too play an incredibly important role in a child's faith development.

So, what are some of the keys to passing along our faith to the children in our life? Well, first is to live it ourselves, to the best of our ability, and to live it in front of the children in our lives. I was having a conversation many months ago about the irony of families looking for a church. Most families, mine included, seek out a church with a good Christian Education program (Sunday School, Youth Group, and Vacation Bible School) for their children. Yet, as the primary faith providers for their children, what might be more essential is a church that nurtures adult faith in a way that equips them to live out their faith in real, relevant, and demonstrated ways. Though, in truth, the ideal would be a congregation that provides relevant ministries for all ages. Children watch the faith of their parents, and other adults in their life, to see if it is worth living!



So, how do you live your faith in front of our children? First, believe you can. We sometimes worry about living our faith openly because in opening up our faith, we worry we will be confronted with our own doubts or be left with questions we can't answer. Thankfully, our children are okay with this. Yes, they usually want an answer when they ask a question, but searching for the answer together can be even more important. If they ask a question of faith that you can't answer, look for the answer together. Ask your elder, a Godparent, or your minister. Look up answers in your

Bible, perhaps using a concordance. Also, let children know that not all answers of faith can be answered easily or quickly. Some questions are part of our faith journey that will be formed and transformed during time, perhaps only to be answered in our death and resurrection.

Also, learn and teach the language of faith. Don't be scared to use 'churchy' words. I fear that many of our children are learning what a double-double is (the language of Tim Hortons) before they learn what resurrection means (the language of faith). We sometimes tend to use simpler language for younger children, but also teach the words that they will be exposed to. If your church has a prayer of invocation, explain that to your children. Some words we might choose to change, but some have incredible meaning and should be taught, not lost. Think of words such as Messiah, revelation, communion, resurrection, and salvation. We teach children all sorts of new words when they take on a new sport or activity, so do the same for their faith.

Also, let your children see you living your faith. Try to read your Bible, or at least have it out, in places where your child can see you. If you are going to a church meeting, let them know. If you are preparing your church envelope, talk about it. Have conversations of faith with a spouse or friend at the dinner table. Get caught praying!

Use ritual with your children. Most families already do. When you eat with your child, say or sing a Christian grace. If you choose a simple one, even young children can participate—even our two-year old daughter Emily joins in with God is great, God is good, Let us thank God for our food. Also, you can consider lighting a Christ candle at your meals. Just light a simple candle to remind the family that as you gather together to eat, Christ is with you. When you extinguish the flame, a simple line can be said, "the smoke going out reminds us that Christ goes with us." At night, read a Bible story or devotional (there is a great selection of suitable children's books available from The Book Room), say a prayer, and consider ending the day with a sung blessing. At our home, we have the children participate in their night-time prayer by saying things they are thankful for, and asking God to be with them or help them with any bad things that are happening, and we close the day by singing the Aaronic

Blessing. (Last night, Emily thanked God for TV, and Veggie Tales.)

Service and giving are also essential parts of our faith. Talk to your children about giving, and look for opportunities to serve together. Although we don't yet talk numbers with our children, they know we give to the church. And, beginning when our son was about five, he started to give too. He is given six quarters each week. One he puts into his long-term savings piggy bank, and one goes into short-term spending. The third goes into his church Sunday school envelope for his weekly offering. (The other three he decides where they go. In the beginning, he divided them equally, but after a few weeks the final three all started going into short-term spending!)

Also consider ways in which you can serve as a family. Families with young children might go and visit a senior's home, pack knap sacks with school supplies, shovel a senior's drive, or go Christmas carolling. Families with older children might be able to sort food at a food bank, make sandwiches for a homeless shelter, make cards for a shut-in, walk dogs, or deliver goodies to an injured friend. As children get older, they can serve at a soup kitchen, babysit for a single parent's group, or even participate in mission trips.

Families can also serve together in the church. Some churches will have families take up the offering together, light Advent calendars, read scripture, or hand out bulletins. When asking where your children might help in church leadership, ask yourself where can any lay person participate? Then, consider which of these tasks your child is capable of and would consider meaningful.

Finally, and likely most importantly, pray for your children. Pray that God will equip you to parent them. Pray for their safety. Pray that God will be present and real in their life.

As a final note, you can also consider having children participate in a WMS meeting. My mom often brought me to WMS meetings when I was little, and as I became older, I participated by reading a piece of scripture, singing, or acting in a skit. I was exposed to the mission work of the church and I saw a great number of women demonstrating their faith in exciting ways! Perhaps for a special meeting, you can invite some of the younger girls of your church to participate in your study or lead a portion of your meeting.

God's Path

by Dorothy Ruddell

During an Advent study in our congregation, I came across this quotation which had meaning for me when I think about my faith and how the practice of that faith has worked out in my life, "To follow God's path is not necessarily to leap and bound over heights, but to put one courageous, faltering step in front of another, time after time after time. Certainty about what the future holds is never possible. But anticipation is."[1] And so, I am pleased to share with you some details of myself and my faith.

In terms of the formation of my faith, I am probably like most women of my generation. I grew up in a practising Christian family where my parents were both very active in their congregation. I was nurtured by their example and the teaching and example of others in worship, Sunday school, mid-week groups, and the Presbyterian young peoples' group. My formation continued with my involvement in a Nurses' Christian Fellowship Group and my eventual studies at Ewart College.

All of that formed the base for the continuing development and practice of my faith for more than three score years and ten. I have rarely missed a Sunday gathering with a church family to worship, and I have supported those families by sharing my gifts of time, talent, and treasure. I have shared and continue to share my faith and gifts in group Bible study, teaching in the Church School, leading in Vacation Bible schools, serving as an elder, and being active in the Women's Missionary Society. All of these activities have served to enrich my faith.

In my present congregation, I have the blessing of wonderfully creative worship prepared by our minister, who is in her first pastoral charge. In turn, I have the privilege as clerk of session, of supporting her as she grows in her ministry and cares for the congregation.

Being an elder and clerk provides me with many opportunities to share

“For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice, the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.” Psalm 33:4-5 NRSV

my faith in several ways—through visits, contacts by telephone, or e-mail with those in my elder’s district; during discussions at session meetings; and helping to carry out decisions that have been made.

Mission has always been an important component in living out my faith. Therefore, it was a great joy to participate in two mission exposure tours—first, to Nicaragua and then to Eastern Europe. Both were very enriching and life-changing experiences. Also, during my service as Book Store Manager in The Presbyterian Church in Canada’s church offices, I was able to promote and share mission, educational, and worship resources with congregations and people across Canada.

Like any other person, I have had those challenging times that come to us in life for which a solid faith is a great resource and support. My husband and I lost a child at birth. I was involved in the final care of all four of our parents. It was particularly meaningful to be present and able to close my mother’s eyes and give God thanks for her beautiful life.

I have also battled with cancer twice—ten years ago and then just two years ago. Again, these were experiences that changed me and gave me a deeper sense of the role faith plays in one’s life. I met wonderful and courageous people, who shared the struggle with me and helped me learn the positive effect of hope. I am now more able to understand the struggles of others, to listen and to offer the hope that arises from faith.

I have the most amazingly supportive spouse. I could not ask for more. For 48 years we have been partners in ministry and shared challenging times together. We also experience the joy that faith brings.

Undergirding all of what I have spoken to this point is meditation on scripture and prayer that is as natural as breathing. I find it combats negative thoughts. Even during routine tasks that don’t require my full attention, I find opportunity for personal prayer.

One of the differences that the nurturing and practice of my faith makes is that I continue to grow in patience, tolerance, and acceptance. These, to my mind, are essential in maintaining healthy and happy relationships with my husband, children, grand-children, siblings, friends, and co-workers in the church. My faith provides me with daily doses of inspiration, hope, peace, and joy. A daily conviction that God loves me exactly as I stand helps me cope. I can “anticipate” that the next day will be the same, and the next, and the next ….

Therefore, I can do no other than celebrate my faith by living it out each day. Three particular ways in which I seek to do this is in a monthly ministry that our congregation has for people in a small care facility in our village where we bring singing, conversation, and birthday gifts for those celebrating birthdays that month. I also do this in a ministry of sharing with our children and grandchildren. I find particular joy and meaning in the ministry of hospitality offered in our home.

However, the prime way I celebrate my faith is by participating in weekly worship (the singing of praises, celebrating Holy Communion, and practising stewardship) with the other people in my congregation. I discover what "fresh" news God has for my life that week and then go out seeking to live my life in terms of that news. I do not know where the week is going to take me or who I am going to meet, but I do know that my "anticipation" to experience all that lies ahead of me is refreshed. I know once again that God will be walking with me. My faith and confidence in God are renewed. God loves me. I am filled with hope, peace, and joy. I celebrate and share my faith in being faithful to God's good news for me and those with whom I walk.

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[1] www.TheThoughtfulChristian.com, 2011 Adult Advent Study, written by Patricia K, Kull, Professor Emerita of Old Testament at Louisville Presbyterian Seminary.

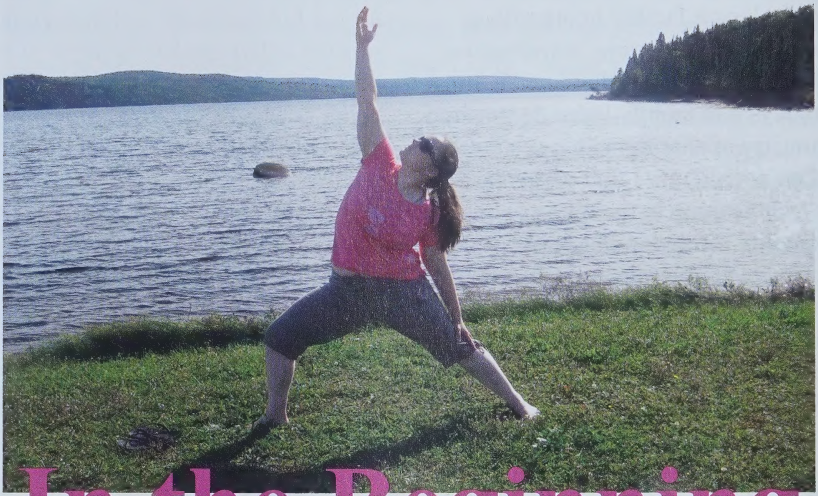
Merci!
Gracias!
Zikomo!

hank you, WMS!

Presbyterian World Service
& Development

S&D would like to thank our friends from WMS for your generous support of 2011
elopment and relief activities. Your prayers
financial support enables life changing
grams to reach thousands of people.

PWS&D team and our global partners thank
for answering the call to share Christ's love
und the world.



In the Beginning

by Erin Joy Whittaker

My faith journey started before I was born, before I could breathe, and before I had any conceptual knowledge of who God was. I believe that God created me, God knew me, God knows me, and that God continues to work in my life today.

I was raised in a Christian household, attended Sunday school, and spent many afternoons at Flora House, the inner city mission run by our denomination, where my father worked. My father taught me the importance of prayer, of compassion, and of service. I acknowledged Christ's ongoing presence in my life when I was twelve years old at a youth retreat, on my own in a hallway—for such a big realization, it was very anticlimactic.

There have been many ups and downs in my relationship with God since that experience thirteen years ago. There have been times spent on the mountain top, when I felt closer to God than I knew was possible, and times spent wandering in the desert, searching for a God I felt I could not reach. I attended a Christian High School and a Christian University College, both of which helped me grow in my faith and my understanding of our Creator. Studying Social Work from a Christian perspective helped me to integrate social work theory and practice with my faith and to better equip me to reach out to those in need.

Where am I now in my faith journey? Well, I'm still on it, which I feel is the most important thing. I connect with God through prayer, scripture reading, corporate worship, and Christian community. I am an elder at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg, an amazing new church (Trinity is just five years old.). It was at this church that I publicly professed my faith as an adult and confirmed the vows my parents made on my behalf at my baptism. Prayer is an important part of my daily life and something which grounds me and connects me. I believe that the Bible is the word of God and that it is relevant to my life today.

God is continually revealing Himself in new and different ways and helping me learn to use the gifts he has given me. I feel very strongly that God has called me to work in Winnipeg's core area. No matter where my path has taken me in other aspects of my life, I have continued to maintain a connection with the area through work or volunteering. I currently work in a specialized office dealing with high-risk and high-needs clients as a Case Coordinator for the Government of Manitoba. In my work, I have encountered situations which I was only able to deal with by God's grace and power. There have been times when the words I have said, though they came from my mouth, were placed there by God. I believe that by showing compassion, love, kindness, dignity, and respect for people, I am able to offer them a glimpse of the love that God has for them.

I believe that God is our Father, and the creator who sent Jesus, his only Son, into the world to bring salvation through faith, by his grace alone. I believe that the Holy Spirit continues to move among us, and through us, at work in the world today. I believe that the church is called to be more than a body of worshipping believers, but a community of people who live out God's mission in the world, and it is through the church universal that God's love and compassion are poured out on his people.

Recently, God has given me a new challenge and I am taking a huge leap out of my comfort zone. In April 2012, I will be heading to Malawi, a country in south-east Africa and one of the poorest in the world, on a Presbyterian Church in Canada exposure trip. I will travel with three people from my church and others from across the PCC. In Malawi, we are going to visit with Presbyterian mission staff, explore community development projects, meet local Christians, and spend time learning about the work of Presbyterian World Service and Development in this area. Although I am incredibly nervous, I am also confident that God will be with me as I go, and will use this trip to help shape me, teach me, and experience him in new and amazing ways!

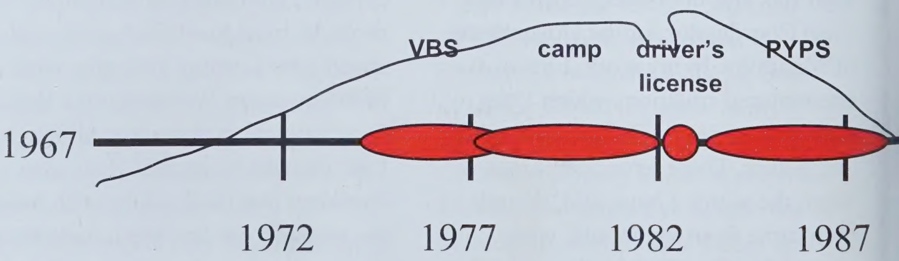
Faith Timeline

by Colleen Wood

Faith is often defined as a belief or trust. For Christians, that belief is in God, our triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For many of us, when we think of our life as a Christian, we think of it as a journey—sometimes gruelling, sometimes simple. For some of you, your defined journey with God began even before you were born. For others, your side of your God relationship might be very new—you may have only been introduced to faith recently. For each of us, young and old, new to the faith, or a lifelong follower, I think it is important to reflect on this journey.

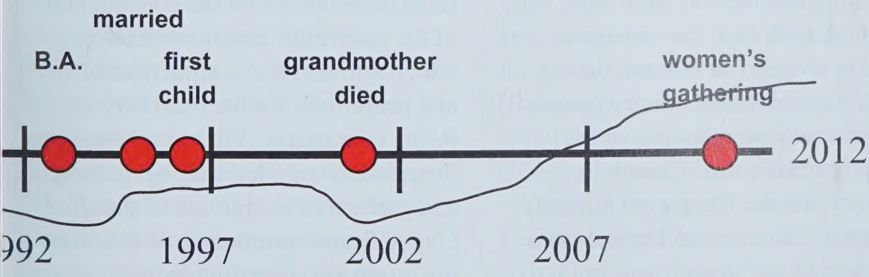
A great way to do this is to create a faith timeline. Here is a simple way to draft your faith timeline:

1. Begin with a large sheet of paper and draw a horizontal down the middle.
2. On the left hand side, write your date of birth, and on the right hand side, write today's date.
3. Make small vertical lines through the horizontal line to divide the line into equal parts, each area representing 3–5 years.
4. Plot important events from your life on the line: marriages, births, deaths, illnesses, and celebrations.

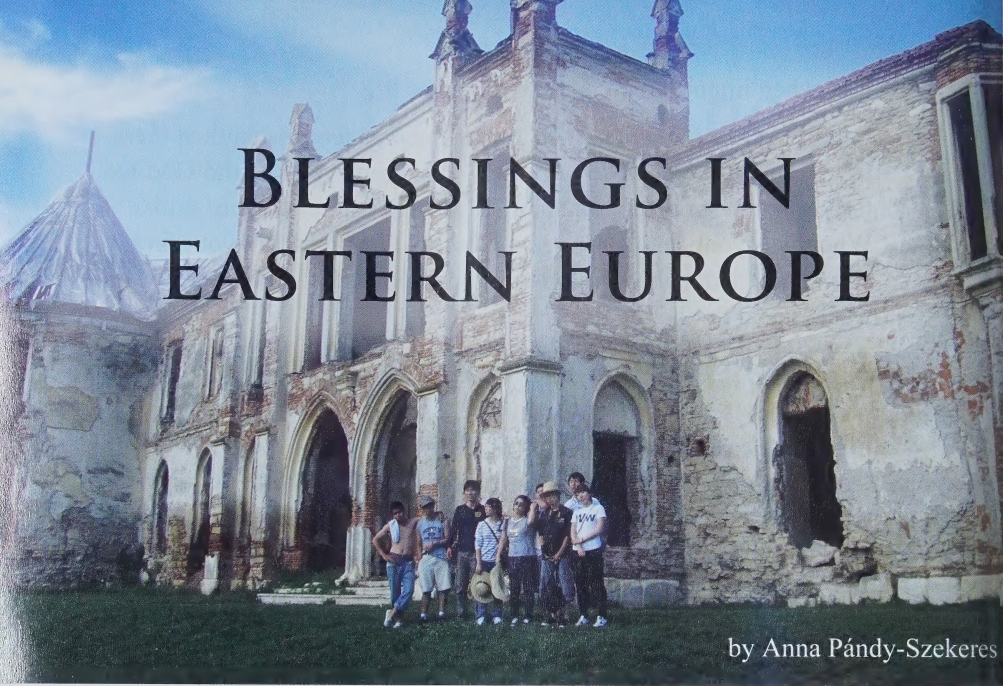


5. Plot when important people entered your life.
6. Finally, take a few minutes in prayer to consider your faith at these times. Did you feel close to God during these events or did God feel farther away. At what points might you have doubted your faith? When was your faith strong and vibrant? For times that your faith was strong, add a dot above the line, and for times when your faith was week, add a dot below the line.
7. Then, connect the dots to see how your faith has changed over the years.
8. Finally, take a few minutes in prayer, reflecting on your life of faith. Give thanks to God for his faithfulness. Give thanks that God was with you, even in your times of doubt. God never leaves us. Rejoice with God for times when your faith was strong. Thank God for those events and for people who restored or enhanced your faith.
9. Finally, take a few minutes in silence to think of ways you can strengthen your faith. Do you need to participate in worship more regularly? Should you join a new Bible study? Is there a Christian book you might want to read? How 'dusty' is your Bible? Perhaps, you should attempt a new spiritual discipline? Maybe you have always wanted to participate in a mission or exposure trip and there is no time like the present. Whatever you decide, small or large, commit it to prayer, continuing your faith walk with God.

Note: For those who feel more creative, you can add colours and/or images to your timeline.



BLESSINGS IN EASTERN EUROPE



by Anna Pándy-Szekeres

This past summer, for the second consecutive year, under the leadership of the Rev. David Son, a group of seven young people from The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Korean congregation of St. Timothy's travelled to East Central Europe as a mission team. Accompanied throughout by David Pándy-Szekeres, and for part of the way by Brian Johnston, both PCC missionaries based in this part of Europe, the group was able to become acquainted with several congregations of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Hungary and the Hungarian minority regions in Ukraine and Transylvania.

Visits to the larger towns in Hungary, Budapest, Sárospatak, and Debrecen were followed by a lengthier stay in the sub-Carpathian Ukraine. The Reformed Church here is an ethnically Hungarian community in a minority situation, but it does exemplary work in many areas, including its work amidst the Gypsy/Roma peoples. In the town of Nagybereg, the mission team happily assumed responsibility for completing tasks associated with the construction of the new multi-functional centre, which will serve as a kindergarten and prayer hall for the local Gypsy/Roma community. For one afternoon, the mission team led singing, games, and crafts for the children of the local Gypsy/Roma community. While here, the group also intermingled with and organized various activities for the students of the Reformed Church

Secondary School of Nagybereg, who were in the midst of a two-week English language camp.

The group also had a chance to travel to the town of Nagydobrony, where it visited the orphanage operated by the Reformed Church. A short stop was then made at the building where Ms Gizella Kupas supervises a kindergarten for local Gypsy/Roma children. She has also established a small museum where different artifacts, furniture and local embroidery are nicely displayed. In the neighbouring town of Tiszaágtelek, the mission team conducted a spirited afternoon of singing, games and crafts for the children of the local Gypsy/Roma commuinity. Another morning was spent digging out potatoes and working on the storage cellar of the Terra Dei agricultural foundation's model farm.

The physical energy expended here by the members of the mission team was rewarded by a bountiful meal of fresh vegetables and goulash cooked outside over an open fire. After these days which was a source of dear memories and deep friendships, the group travelled to Transylvania (Rumania), to a region which, along with Hungary and the western edge of Ukraine, was once one country.

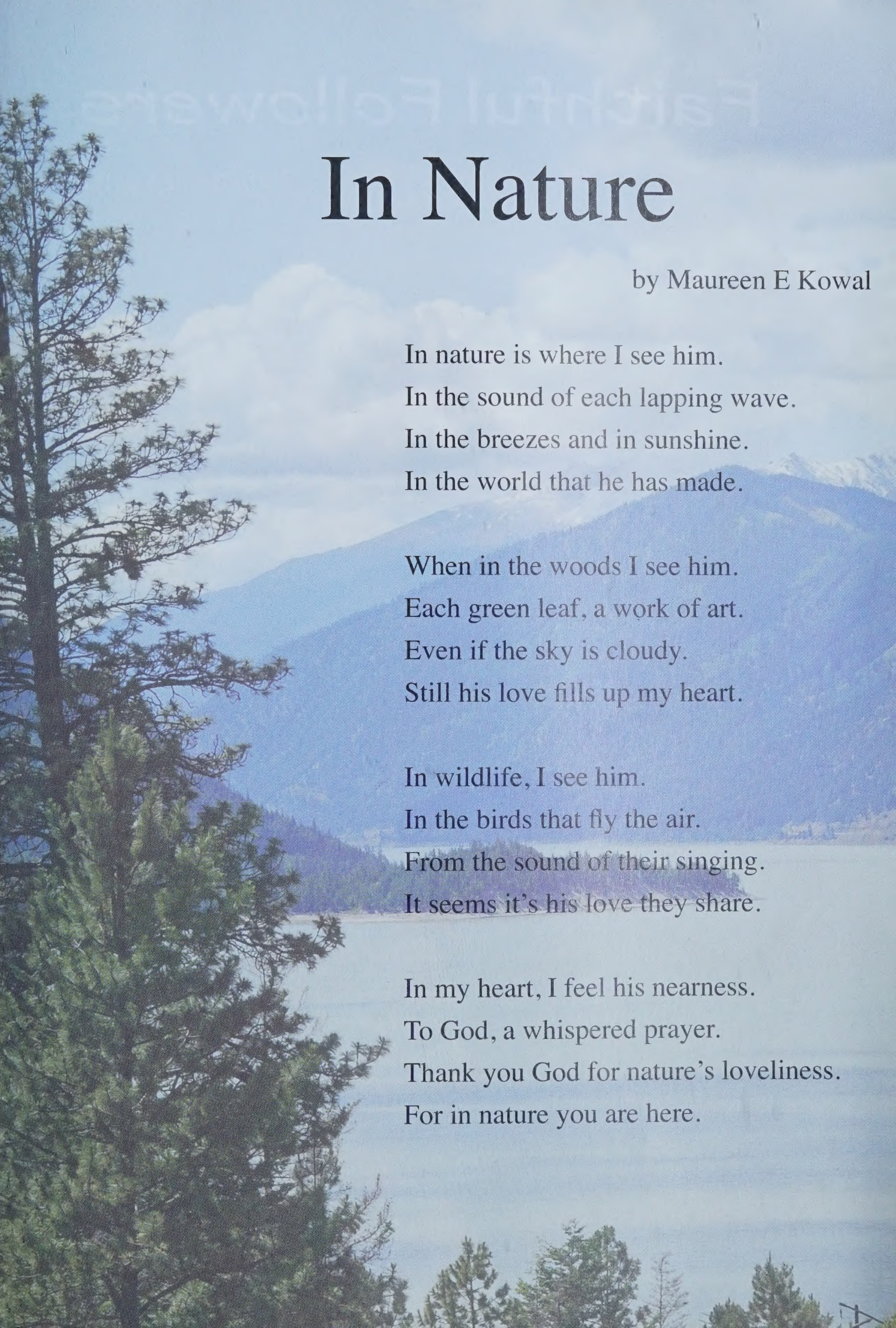
During the group's time in Transylvania, there was a chance to visit a few churches of the Reformed denomination in small villages, where evidence of the local peasant culture abounds in the pieces of detailed handmade embroidery adorning the pulpit, the Lord's table, or the front of the pews.

A good part of one day was spent visiting the historic sites in the heart of the city of Kolozsvár/Cluj, some of these being the United Protestant Seminary, the oldest Reformed Church, the Reformed Church elementary and secondary school, St. Michael's Roman Catholic church and the Bánffy family's château. From here the group headed out into the countryside, first making a brief stop in the village of Válaszút, where a week-long folk dance and folk music summer school was vibrantly engaging the energies of the many participants, before arriving in the village of Kide where the team spent the next two and a half days as guests of the local Reformed Church congregation. While in Kide, the team members spent the good part of a day cutting up logs and then splitting them to provide firewood for winter for some of the senior members of the congregation.

The Sunday worship service was led by local minister, Tibor Nagy, and included extended participation by the visitors who offered several hymns and songs, some in Korean, some in English, and some in Hungarian. Rev. David Son provided the message, which touched upon the signifigance of the fact that the village's name of Kide means "hope" in Korean.

The mission group spent its final evening on August 20 in Budapest, where it was able to watch a dazzling display of fireworks as it unfolded over the Danube River, marking the 1,115th anniversary of the establishment of the Hungarian kingdom.

The two weeks proved once again that any group which decides to undertake a tour of mission will not only do service to the community it visits, but will itself also be richly blessed in countless ways.



In Nature

by Maureen E Kowal

In nature is where I see him.
In the sound of each lapping wave.
In the breezes and in sunshine.
In the world that he has made.

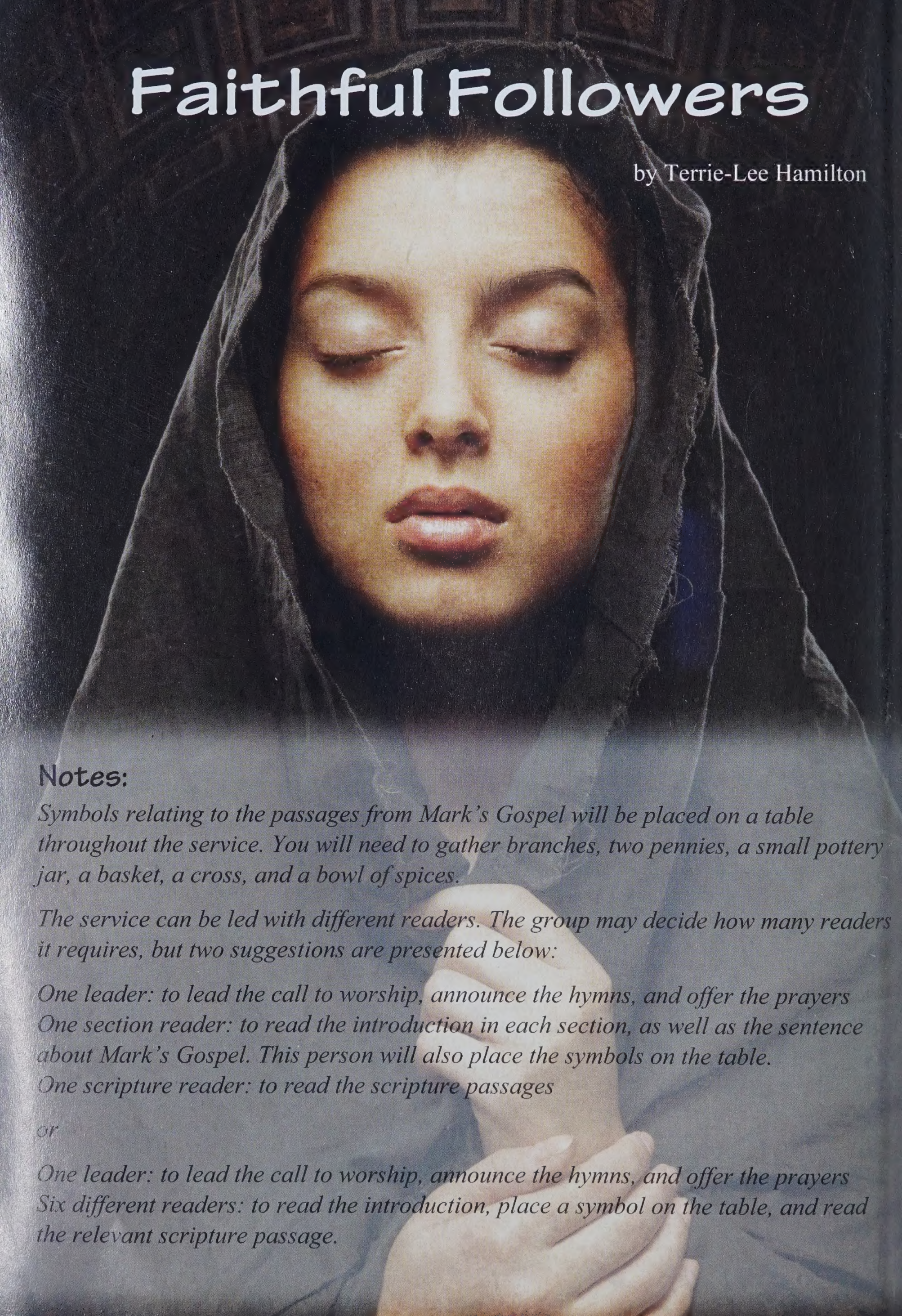
When in the woods I see him.
Each green leaf, a work of art.
Even if the sky is cloudy.
Still his love fills up my heart.

In wildlife, I see him.
In the birds that fly the air.
From the sound of their singing.
It seems it's his love they share.

In my heart, I feel his nearness.
To God, a whispered prayer.
Thank you God for nature's loveliness.
For in nature you are here.

Faithful Followers

by Terrie-Lee Hamilton



Notes:

Symbols relating to the passages from Mark's Gospel will be placed on a table throughout the service. You will need to gather branches, two pennies, a small pottery jar, a basket, a cross, and a bowl of spices.

The service can be led with different readers. The group may decide how many readers it requires, but two suggestions are presented below:

One leader: to lead the call to worship, announce the hymns, and offer the prayers
One section reader: to read the introduction in each section, as well as the sentence about Mark's Gospel. This person will also place the symbols on the table.
One scripture reader: to read the scripture passages

or

One leader: to lead the call to worship, announce the hymns, and offer the prayers
Six different readers: to read the introduction, place a symbol on the table, and read the relevant scripture passage.

Introduction to the service

Faithful followers of Christ span the centuries. From his early days up to today, Jesus was surrounded by people who believed in him and his teachings. There have been many faithful women who have found unique ways of expressing their faith in Jesus through worship, service, and study. In this time of worship, we return to the days of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection to rediscover the early female followers of Jesus. Using the Gospel of Mark, the gospel for this lectionary year, we will hear their stories, see what it meant for women to follow Jesus, and reflect on their witness of Jesus Christ.

This worship service invites the group to reflect upon the women who were present with Jesus from his entry into Jerusalem through to those who witnessed his resurrection. As you reflect on these women, you will be faithful witnesses to Christ's resurrection and life.

Call to Worship

Leader: During this time of worship, we journey with the faithful women who followed Jesus to Jerusalem.

All: We will move from the city outskirts to its centre as we faithfully follow Jesus.

Leader: The women shared their gifts of branches, spices, and coins.

All: We will share our gifts of service, study, and worship.

Leader: The women listened and responded in action and word.

All: We will listen to the story of Christ's passion and resurrection and respond with our witnessing words and deeds.

Leader: Come now faithful women, join the journey.

Hymn: #205, O love, how deep, how broad, how high

A week is not very long. It can go by very quickly. It can be full of many activities. It can be a turning point. Indeed the week that began with Jesus entering Jerusalem and concluded with his resurrection, was a very full week. It was filled with activities, encounters with people, and diverse feelings and reactions. Throughout this week, there were women who travelled to hear Jesus, women who cared for him, women who wailed for him, and women who witnessed his resurrection. Hear their stories ....

Prayer

Gracious God: As we listen to the story of the women who followed Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem: may our hearts and minds be open to reflect on the relationship they had with him, may we see how this relationship influenced their compassion and actions towards others, and may we respond with actions as faithful followers today. In Jesus name, Amen.

Women, part of the crowd

Often we forget that women were part of the crowds that travelled from village to village to listen to the great teacher, Jesus. We fail to recognise that they were in the villages and city squares when Jesus told about God's love and compassion for people. We cannot imagine that women would have seen and spoken of the tensions that arose from Jesus' encounters with their religious leaders. But the women were there, they saw, and they spoke.

Lay branches on the table.

Read Mark 11:1–2 and 7–10.

Mark conveys to us that women were ready to welcome Jesus as king, an ancestor of David.

Today let us receive Jesus as our Messiah who leads us majestically throughout our daily lives.

A woman's two coins

In the surroundings of the temple, Jesus spoke in parables, was challenged by the temple leaders, and continued to give insight into God's relationship with the people. The parables jarred the leaders to question and provoke Jesus about his authority. They taunted him with scenarios of paying taxes, death, relationships, and commandments. Jesus' responses countered their questioning with further confrontations. But to the delight of the crowds, Jesus' replies spoke of hope for a new life-giving relationship with God. Observing the ongoing activities of the square, Jesus noticed a woman.

Lay two pennies on the table.

Read Mark 12:41–44.

Mark tells us of women understanding the needs of their community and contributing to the working of their society with whatever they had.

Today let us give of ourselves to serve our neighbours as we celebrate Jesus' compassion for all God's people.

A woman with a jar

Away from the hustle and bustle of Jerusalem's political, religious, and economic affairs, Jesus was among friends. Friends gathered to share a meal and conversation. Knowing that tensions were high and circumstances were about to change, these friends likely were talking about the events from the past few days and seeking clarification from Jesus about his comments. Perhaps they were expressing their own anxiety and fears. Among the friends, a woman with a costly jar of expensive oil anointed Jesus, and with that action things began to change.

Lay a jar on the table.

Read Mark 14:3–9.

Mark shares with us the intimacy of friends surrounding Jesus and one woman's act of devotion.

Today let us demonstrate our devotion to Jesus through our compassionate and caring actions.

An observant servant girl

Watching people in the court yard, a young worker began to stare at someone who seemed familiar. She recognised a follower of Jesus and called out to him, but he refuted what she said. He moved away. Recognising him again, and being assured of who it was, she told those around her of this follower of the Galilean teacher. Once more he denied who he was. A little later, with certainty, some people in the crowd confronted him about his identity. Yet again, he refuted their claims. In the midst of the courtyard noise, the piercing sound of a cock's crow silenced the crowd.

Lay a basket on the table.

Read Mark 14:66–72.

Mark uses the encounters of strangers to compel followers to be forthcoming about their relationship with Jesus.
Today, let us find ways to tell friends and strangers about our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Women weep from afar

In the midst of the crowds on the hill with crosses, there were women watching, wailing, and weeping. Many women, who had travelled with Jesus from Galilee to the city, were watching with tears in their eyes the terrifying death of a great leader and teacher. A few of them—Mary Magdalene, Mary, and Salome—while not wanting to see their friend's devastating death, knew they needed to witness this dreadful event. Out of their watching came weeping and wailing.

Lay a cross on the table.

Read Mark 15:33–41.

Mark emphasises the number of women who stood on the hill, Golgotha, to witness the crucifixion of Jesus.

Today let us remember women who in the midst of suffering shed their tears of pain.

Women with special spices

For three days, the women waited until they could go to the tomb. They gathered their spices, those which were used for the care of the deceased. Finally the morning came, and they left early for the tomb. In their journey, they were concerned with how they would enter the sealed tomb and offer the gifts of spices in the care for their friend, who had died. When they arrived the stone had been moved to clear the entry way. They entered to find that their friend was not there. They were not able to use the spices. They were told that that Jesus was risen and to tell his other friends, and they fled in terror and amazement.

Lay a bowl of spices on the table.

Read Mark 16:1–11.

In this passage, Mark proclaims the good news "He had been raised; he is not here," and the women heard. Then, they told others.

Today, as faithful followers, let us spread the wonderful news, Jesus is risen. He is risen indeed.

Offering

The offering will now be received.

Prayer

Gracious God: We thank you for the women who followed Jesus throughout the villages and countryside as he taught about new life and relationships, challenged people's understandings and actions, and invited people to change their ways.

We thank you for the women who stayed with Jesus during his stay in Jerusalem and Bethany as they waved branches of celebration, offered money for the support of others, used costly ointments to prepare the pending death, spoke up to challenge others to say who they were and who they followed, wept and wailed at the death of their friend, and witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ, their saviour.

We, remembering the faithfulness of these women will discover ways in which our branches can celebrate life; our coins can make a difference to relationships in our world; our ointments can offer healing and well-being to others; our baskets can gather food and clothing for sharing; our weeping and wailing can become voices for change; and our witnessing to Christ's resurrection will bring peace to our world.

We, your faithful followers today, offer this prayer, through Jesus Christ, our risen friend and savour. Amen

Hymn: #249, The day of resurrection or #248, At the dawning of salvation

Benediction

(With each line, a member of the group will take the item from the table)

Leader: The journey continues for faithful followers of Christ:

Reader 1: With the branches waving to celebrate Jesus, our teacher, friend and savour.

Reader 2: With coins supporting our neighbourhoods and international communities.

Reader 3: With ointment providing compassionate care and healing.

Reader 4: With baskets offering gifts to support others.

Reader 5: With the cross reminding us of the suffering of Jesus.

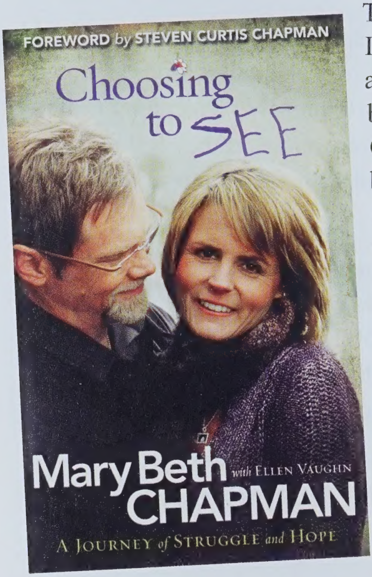
Reader 6: With spices remembering the empty tomb proclaiming, Jesus Christ is risen.

All: Jesus is risen indeed.

Reviews

Choosing to See

by Mary Beth Chapman


FOREWORD by STEVEN CURTIS CHAPMAN
Choosing to SEE
Mary Beth CHAPMAN
with ELLEN VAUGHN
A JOURNEY of STRUGGLE and HOPE

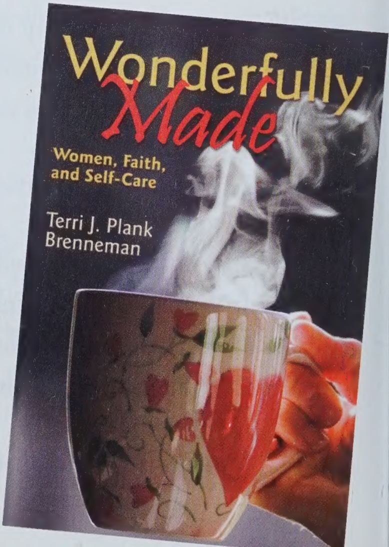
This book had been on my shelf for a while and I finally decided I should crack the binding. I am glad I did. It is a very moving book written by Mary Beth Chapman, the wife of Steven Curtis Chapman. I loved the honesty of this book. Her doubts and her challenges of holding it all together are something that most Christian women, especially ones with young children, can relate too.

It is a hard read in sections. Her five-year-old daughter is tragically killed in an accident. Her pain is raw. But it is worth reading. No matter what our own tragedies, big or small, I think we can relate to her feelings. And she does give us permission to ask God some of the questions we might want to ask in our own sorrows.

So, if you want an interesting book, that will have you laughing and crying, and that has depth, this is a good one to pick up.

Wonderfully Made, Women, Faith and Self-Care

by Terri J. Plank Brenneman


Wonderfully Made
Women, Faith, and Self-Care
Terri J. Plank Brenneman

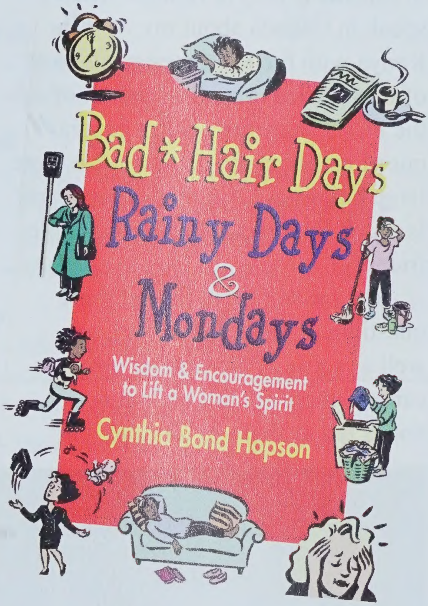
This book consists of 12 Bible studies, followed by a closing worship. It comes from the premise, that to "offer good and healthy care to others, we need to nurture and replenish ourselves, our primary resource." Brenneman brings a great background to this study, having been trained as a clinical psychologist, and completed Biblical studies.

Each session has a short scripture reading and a short overview of the passage. She then suggests a visual and gives a gathering that can read. Finally, she goes into more depth on the topic and gives us questions for integrating the theme into our lives. Her closing consists of a prayer and some suggested songs.

Theme includes rest, sharing burdens, dealing with worry, and creativity. This would be a wonderful study for a group of women to work through together, though it can also be used individually.

Bad Hair Days, Rainy Days, and Monday
by Cynthia Bond Hopson

This small devotional offers a month's worth of readings. Each day begins with a scripture reading, and then a short reflection. Each day ends with a short prayer. Hopson has a great since of humour and an enjoyable and easy writing style. She encourages us to become more adventurous, find the things that comfort us, rejoice in ourselves. This book would make a nice gift for a female friend, mother, or grown daughter.



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Mission In Action

Rick Allen

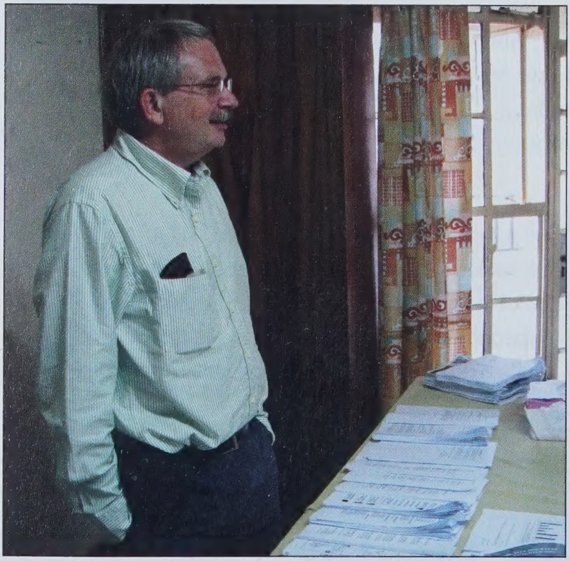
Life in Kenya's Capital, Nairobi

It has been 17 years since I went out with The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) to Kenya. When I speak in Canada about my work in Kenya with the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (a partner church of the PCC), there are always general questions about the country: Are there large buildings? Are there many cars? Is much English spoken? Are people friendly?

The answer to all four of these questions is 'yes'. In Nairobi, as well as some of the smaller urban centres, there are tall buildings—not as tall as those in Toronto, but nevertheless, tall. Nairobi traffic is simply a nightmare with cars and pedestrians everywhere—to say that traffic rules are not closely followed is a gross understatement! The official language of Kenya is actually English, with Swahili being designated as their national language. Within Nairobi, one hears a mixture of English, Swahili, and many of the tribal languages. People are very friendly and polite; if a visitor to the country has the opportunity to enter someone's home, he or she can be assured of a warm welcome.

Almost anything you need or want is obtainable somewhere in the city. Most people shop in small kiosks or open markets, but there are also large supermarkets and department stores. In the open markets, the final price of goods is determined after much bartering; in the larger stores, prices are fixed. Gas stations (or as they call them in Kenya, petrol stations) are everywhere, but over the last few years shortages of gas have become more frequent.

The total area covered by Nairobi is less than Toronto, but the population is larger. The majority of



Rick provides information and education regarding HIV/AIDS.

residents live in slum areas. The slums have very little infrastructure, often with no electricity and very poor sanitation facilities. The slum dwellings are basically one- or two-room tin shacks, which are often occupied by six or more family members. From certain view points in the city, the tin roofs of the slum houses seem to stretch on forever. Outside the slums, numerous apartment buildings, townhouses, and single home dwellings continue to spring up—they house the middle class sector. In certain parts of the city, large manicured estates are occupied by the rich.

Overseas Staff Birthdays

March
13 – Todd Statham, Malawi
31 – Michael Tai, Taiwan

April
11 – Sean Allison, Cameroon
17 – Peter Pandy-Szekeres, Hungary
22 – Linda Inglis, Malawi
29 – Michael Burns, Malawi

May
1 – Mio Statham, Malawi

Nairobi weather is almost perfect. Even though the city is just south of the equator, it is located on a plateau which moderates the temperature. Most days are a little hot, but during July and August the city can actually become somewhat cold, especially at night. There are two distinct rainy seasons, usually in March and October. If a rainfall is very heavy, the streets flood and traffic can come to a halt for hours.

One of the most challenging things about living in Nairobi is the poor security situation. The high unemployment rate and poverty give rise to theft and violence, including pickpocketing, house break-ins, car hijackings, and murders. Nairobi inhabitants abhor the security situation. One can take precautions (like not being out at night) to limit the chances of being involved in a violent situation.

Interruptions in the electrical supply are very common. Such interruptions pose big problems to businesses and industry and are, of course, an inconvenience to households. Where I live, the electricity goes out once or twice a week, usually for some hours, but occasionally for some days. It seems that any time I must finish a document on my computer for the next day, the power suddenly goes out!

Prior to the introduction of mobile phones, only a very small percentage of residents had phones, but these days the majority of people have a mobile phone in their pocket. It is not uncommon to see a man pulling a large wooden two-wheel cart (used for transporting goods in the city) in the middle of traffic and at the same time talking on a mobile phone. The cost of using mobile phones in Kenya is significantly cheaper than in Canada.

A very unique feature about Nairobi is that a national game park is located within the city limits. The park is home to many different birds and animals, including lions, cheetahs, giraffes, buffalo, and rhinos. Seeing a lion or rhino in its natural habitat is fascinating, especially when the distant background is made up of the tall buildings within Nairobi's business section.

Churches, mosques, and to a lesser degree, Hindu temples, are found throughout the city. There is even one synagogue. The hundreds of churches vary in size and are a mixture of mainline, Pentecostal, and Catholic denominations. Several beautiful large stone churches from the colonial period are found in the city centre. In general, churches are well attended.

Nairobi is certainly an interesting place to live in with so much activity everywhere. People, however, have to keep their wits about them with respect to the security situation. Living in Nairobi is certainly not like living elsewhere in the country. Life is generally slower-moving in towns and villages, rural farm areas, and remote areas in northern Kenya.

Christmas at Tidzalerana

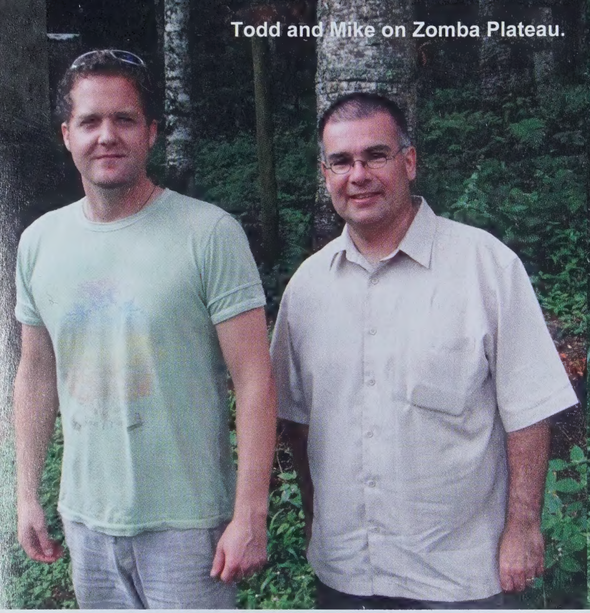
Mike and Debbie Burns

Our First Christmas Season in Malawi

We had some trepidation leading up to our first Christmas season. While we certainly missed everyone this year, we can say that we had a good Christmas being in a new country, with a new church, new traditions, new friends, new pets, and a new lifestyle. We look forward to 2012 and all that it will bring.

We had a festive start to the Christmas season with an invitation to a Christmas Open House at an Irish couple's home. There were some familiar components to the party—Christmas lights and decorations, singing of Christmas carols, Christmas treats, wishing Merry Christmas to one another, but there were unfamiliar parts too—no Christmas tree and definitely no snow (it was around 30 degrees Celsius that day and not much cooler that evening), and many mosquitos. A few nights later, we got together with Canadian, Malawian, and American friends at Linda and Glenn's home (PCC) to celebrate some wedding anniversaries. We enjoyed good food and fellowship and their home was ready for Christmas, including many lights and ornaments and a decorated artificial Baobab tree, instead of a pine or fir tree—thanks for the idea Linda! We brought a few special Christmas ornaments with us from

Reading the scripture


Todd and Mike on Zomba Plateau.

The children heading b
from the picnic.

Canada, purchased a few here, and the Hoekstra family (PCC), who lived here previously, left some for us to decorate our home for Christmas. We also listened to our Christmas CDs to get us in the Christmas spirit.

December 24 was St. James CCAP's 3:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols service. After spending almost 15 years attending Knox Waterloo's multiple, unique, and moving Christmas Eve services, we must admit we were a little unsure how one two-hour service would go. Furthermore, St. James' leadership cautioned us that the Christmas Eve service had not been well attended in the past and may even be less attended with Christmas Day being on a Sunday with its morning worship services. There were a few unexpected glitches—we arrived 30 minutes early to prepare for the service with session members, but no one else started arriving until 3:00 p.m. Only three of the eight choirs that were performing, and no one from the Sunday School (who were to do a Christmas story), had arrived by 3:20 p.m., when we started the service. As always happens when we open ourselves to the Spirit, the service came together beautifully. Most of the choirs showed up and sang a number of choruses and some Christmas hymns new to us—including one in Chichewa that told of Joseph and Mary's big surprise at being pregnant. Various people came forward to read scripture; we heard the Christmas story through the scriptures; and the Sunday school provided a well-organized and acted Christmas story. To bring in some familiarity, we even sang "Silent Night" in Chichewa. The attendance was low, but the enthusiasm, participation, and faithfulness was high.

December 25, Christmas Day, brought with it two Sunday worship services at St. James. There were the usual 6:00 a.m. Chichewa and 8:00 a.m. English services, but the 10:00 a.m. Chichewa service was cancelled. We attended the 8:00 a.m. English service, which was well attended. In my memory, this was the first Christmas Day worship service I have ever attended, so it brought with it a special importance to me. Various choirs performed and we sang a few Christmas hymns, including O come all ye faithful. The Sunday school performed their Christmas story drama very well again—the only difference being that there was a live baby Jesus, instead of the teddy bear baby Jesus that was in the Christmas Eve service! Mike preached from John 1:1-18, The Word Became Flesh.

Christmas Day activities continued after the worship service. We came home and were able to have a Skype chat with my dad, sister and brother, and my friend Nancy. Being able to see them made being apart from our loved ones a little easier. We were also delighted to be able to go to Todd and Annika's (PCC) home in Zomba for Christmas dinner and overnight. It was wonderful to spend Christmas with our friends that we are serving here with. They have two young children as well, which makes our visits with them extra special. This was our first trip to Zomba in six months due to a severe fuel shortage that continues in Malawi.

December 26 brought a new and memorable experience for us. After a scrumptious breakfast provided by Annika and Todd, the six of us hopped into their vehicle and made the steep and picturesque climb further up the Zomba plateau to meet some of their friends. Other than our visits to their home, we have not been on the plateau and looked forward to being out in God's creation, getting some exercise, and having fellowship with some new people. We had a beautiful hike along a clear river and were able to see a number of waterfalls. The sounds, sights, and smells really reminded us of our beloved Nova Scotia, where my paternal extended family live, where my Dad spends his summers, and where we visit almost every year. We all enjoyed a delicious potluck picnic following our hike. We departed Zomba early in the afternoon to get back home to Blantyre to prepare for our five-day retreat with St. James' youth that was to begin the morning of December 27.

We are very thankful to God for continuing to bless us so abundantly and in so many ways. We give thanks to our family, friends, and faith communities in Malawi, Canada, and around the world, and for all that this first Christmas season in Malawi has been. Peace be with all of you for 2012.

Rev. Murray Garvin

It is with sadness that we let you know that the Rev. Murray Garvin passed away peacefully on January 9 in his sleep at Yu Shan Theological College in Taiwan, where he had been a teacher.

His life was spent in glad service to the Lord he loved. He had served in Taiwan for 21 years as a Presbyterian Church in Canada missionary with his wife Mary Helen, raising their five children in Taiwan. Upon returning to Canada, he was minister of Weston Presbyterian Church and then was appointed Secretary for Mission Education under the old Board of World Mission. Murray then served in the Kootenays, until his retirement. He returned to Taiwan several years ago as a volunteer missionary, teaching at YuShan theological seminary in Hualien—a seminary for aboriginal students. Murray died in the place that he loved.

He is survived by his brother, the Rev. Robert C. Garvin (Carol); his dear friend and former wife, Mary Helen Garvin; daughters Ruth Garvin and Anne Burleigh (Dave); sons David, Michael (Carole) and Peter (Winnie); and 9 grandchildren. Memorial gifts can be made to The Presbyterian Church in Canada to support a Taiwanese aboriginal theological student.

Mission Profiles

Did you know you can find out more about our Presbyterian Church in Canada mission staff by visiting their mission profiles at:
http://www.presbyterian.ca/resources/online/270

Consider sharing this information at your next WMS meeting. To prepare, read the staff profile and pick out the most interesting details to share. Have a few extra minutes of preparation time? Learn more about the country where they serve and you can share that as well. Consider details, such as language, climate, religion, and literacy rates.

Beginning with the July August 2012 issue, and with three more sessions in future editions of *Glad Tidings*, learn more about children living in poverty in Canada. One in ten children in Canada live in poverty!

Each session will include some Biblical reflection, information on the theme, and some worship elements. These short studies will have resources for both group and individual study, and additional resources will be available online.

A new resource for you ...

WMS Mission Study: Children in Poverty in Canada

The writer, the Rev. Helen Smith, will bring a wealth of knowledge to this study. She served for nine years at Evangel Hall, an inner city mission in downtown Toronto, as Program Director and for two years as the Director of Camp Kannawin in Alberta. Most recently she was the minister on staff at a downtown agency for the homeless in Calgary. She currently serves as minister at Centennial Presbyterian Church in Calgary.

The WMS ... Did you Know?

This month, you have the opportunity to test your knowledge of the Women's Missionary Society. You might want to bring this to your next meeting and discover who is the WMS genius in your group.

1. The *Glad Tidings* magazine was first published in:
   (a) 1925
   (b) 1914
   (c) 1942

2. The Women's Missionary Society exists in which areas:
   (a) All of Canada
   (b) Quebec through to British Columbia
   (c) The Atlantic Provinces through to Ontario
   (d) All of North America

3. Name three of the last five WMS presidents.

4. How many national staff positions are there for the WMS?

5. The forerunner of *Glad Tidings* was:
   (a) *The Missionary Messenger*
   (b) *The Foreign Missionary Tidings*
   (c) *Stories of Mission*
   (d) There was no forerunner to *Glad Tidings*

6. In 1925, the subscription price for *Glad Tidings* was:
   (a) 35 cents
   (b) 50 cents
   (c) free

7. What is the name of the WMS newsletter?

8. *Glad Tidings* receives funding from:
   (a) The Presbyterian Church in Canada
   (b) Canada Church Press
   (c) Canada Periodical Fund

9. What areas of mission and ministry in Canada have the national WMS historically been involved in? (Hint: there are 4 broad areas)

10. Name one of the four first presidents of the Montreal WMS, Woman's Foreign Mission Society, WMS (WD) or Women's Home Mission Society.

11. What year was the mission work of the WMS and the PCC integrated?

12. What anniversary is the national WMS celebrating in 2014?

13. Name 3 WMS resources?

Answers

1. a
2. b
3. Joan Smith (2010–Current), Drusela (Druse) Bryan (2007–2010), Margaret McGillivray, (2004–2007), Joanne Instance (2001–2004), and Mary Moorhead (1999–2001)
4. 7 positions, 2 of which are in The Book Room
5. a
6. a
7. WMS Matters!
8. c
9. Hospitals (Nurses, Nursing Superintendents, Chaplains, Doctors), Schools (Residential schools, Girls' Homes, CGIT, VBS), Immigrants (Port workers, Hospital Visitor, clothing gifts, assistance finding employment, railway workers, missionary vans), Inner City and Aboriginal work (children's centres, counseling, recreation/fellowship centres, housing international students, VBS)
10. Mrs. J. Redpath, Montreal WMS, Mrs. W MacLaren, Woman's Foreign Mission Society, Mrs. J. Steele, WMS (WD) or Mrs. R. Smellie, Women's Home Mission Society
11. 1972
12. 100th
13. *WMS Matters!*, *Glad Tidings*, Introducing the WMS, *On the Move ... in Mission* (2000–2010), Mission Awareness Sunday, Annual Report Book, bulletin inserts, Together We Can! projects, *Resource Book II*. Stories of Mission and the Mission Study are The Presbyterian Church in Canada resources, used by most WMS groups.

In the Society

Presbyterial

Maitland Presbyterial WMS held their annual meeting on January 16 at St. Andrew's, Wingham. The Rev. Skelding offered greetings and blessing and the Brussels WMS led the worship service on the theme, "Be Transformed." The regular reports were submitted and approved.

The Rev. Shelly Butterfield-Kocis, our guest speaker, talked about the role of liturgical dance in worship. This may be expressed as simply putting actions to a song or as formally as choreographing a dance. The ladies enjoyed participating in several methods of worship through dance.

Mary Simmons shared her experiences at the National Women's Conference held last Spring. She was challenged to look at women around the world who suffer from hunger, abuse, lack of schooling, and finding purpose in life. The conference allowed Mary opportunities to process a variety of information and she is still using this to change the way she interacts in the world.

Rev. Butterfield-Kocis led a meaningful Communion service, keeping us focused on the Saviour, to end our day.

London Presbyterial held their Fall Mission Day on September 22 at Fingal Presbyterian Church with the theme, God's Bounty. Following registration and refreshments, Valerie Shaw and Elaine Brown led a sing-a-long. President Cathy Reid opened the meeting with prayer and welcomed everyone.

We then sang, Now thank we all our God, and a greeting, roll call, and reports followed. The Rev. Anne Yee-Hibbs, Area Educational Consultant, led the Bible study introducing the Cariboo study. Following this, Marion Weldon gave book reviews and we enjoyed a lunch provided by the Fingal WMS.

The afternoon session began with another sing-a-long, and then Kathryn Tew introduced the guest speaker, Jonathon Lee, Treasurer of Canadian Foodgrains Bank and Director of Camp Kintail. Jonathon brought greetings from the Rev. Theresa MacDonald Lee and all at Camp Kintail, and expressed their appreciation to the many WMS groups who attended Cake by the Lake.

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank began in 1982, and The Presbyterian Church in Canada began working with this unique and effective aid agency in 1993. In the 80s, crops were sent to needy countries, but currently, crops are sold in Canada and the dollars generated are used to purchase needed grains closer to the country that is receiving the aid. Canadian Foodgrains Bank—a nongovernmental agency—works with organizations within the countries receiving the aid and receives government support through CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency).

Joan Bayce led the closing worship using Psalm 65:9 as the theme. After singing Let all things Now Living, we left to reflect on God's Bounty as we drove to our homes on a beautiful Fall afternoon.

Barrie Presbyterial sponsored A Day Apart on October 15 at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Barrie. The day's theme was, Women—Follow Jesus. Catherine Brown led a hymn sing, and then Jill Pardy and Irene Bowes led opening worship, based on the hymn, Take My Life and Let It Be.

Marie Schandlen then moderated a panel discussion about various women in the Bible, with Dorothy Ruddell, Catherine Elliott, and Lois Cullis. There were opportunities for all the women present to participate. Following the panel, Dorothy Ruddell reviewed some books, and the Westminster ladies provided lunch.

In the afternoon, we were invited to view various displays and presentation set up around the church, including Cariboo Mission Trip, Liturgical Dance, Clowning, Prayer and Meditation, Human Trafficking, and WMS Special Projects. The Rev. Matthew Ruttan led communion to close our day together.

East Toronto Presbyterial met on November 26 at Rosedale Presbyterian Church, Toronto. President Priscilla Anderson welcomed the 38 ladies and 3 men and thanked the ladies from Rosedale Church for providing the delicious refreshments. The Rev. Wes Denyer also issued a warm welcome. Katherine Allen and Anna Cook led us in the singing of Advent hymns.

Worship opened with singing, Come Thou Long Expected Jesus, followed by the Bible reading from Matthew 25:1–13. Marjorie Ross then gave a meditation on this passage about the five wise women and the five foolish women waiting for the arrival of the bridegroom. She said that waiting is often a struggle, but God sustains us in the waiting. Advent is a season of preparing our hearts for Jesus, the bridegroom.

The business reports were then given. Then Katherine Allen introduced the Rev. Ed Hoekstra who has returned from a three-year term serving with the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in Malawi as our guest speaker. On November 1, he was inducted as the minister at Oakridge Church in London.

Ed opened with a rousing "Hallelujah, God is Good. All the Time, All the Time, God is Good. It is His Nature."

His first posting in 2008 was with the General Secretary, the Rev.McDonald Kadawati in the congregation at Chigoti (on the outskirts of Blantyre) and in January of 2009 he started at St. Columba Church in Blantyre, a congregation of 4000 members as the Associate Minister. He conducted church services, funerals and weddings, and provided counselling in English and Chichewa. The Synod transferred him from St. Columba to St. Michael's and All Angels in September 2010, alongside the Rev. Andrew Kamponda, and he was able to use his Chichewa more extensively.

In January 2009, he became assistant chaplain at the Chichiri prison with Synod Chaplain, the Rev. Chimesya. Ed led the Tuesday morning Bible study with about 200 inmates. The prison system in Malawi is not good; it was originally built to house 800 inmates but holds up to 2,000. They have to sleep sitting up because of the overcrowding. Ed brought his guitar with him and a choir was formed which is in the process of making a CD, which should be available for sale in Canada soon. It was very encouraging to see the lives of many of the inmates changed by the message of Jesus' love for them. The music ministry is growing with two guitars donated from Canada.

Their two sons, Jacob (18) and Nico (14), accompanied him and Jackie and their two daughters, Elleana and Keira, visited them. Elleana is a mid-wife and worked at Mulanje Hospital and Keira taught English at a local high school. Jackie became the secretary of the Board of the Tidzalerana Club, a shelter for many of the physically or mentally handicapped members of the Nhirande community. She also volunteers and helps organize meetings with crafts, singing, and physiotherapy.

Farewell
Friend

Jean Baudoux (left) and Donna Delacretaz, WMS member and Clerk of Session at Farewell for Jean Baudoux.

Malawi is home to 14 million people, 11% of whom live with HIV/AIDS. Although there is enough food in Malawi—fruit trees are in abundance—food distribution is a big problem. Even though the present economic situation is not good and unemployment is high, he described the Malawian people as a hopeful people, believing that God will provide.

He said that he and his family felt that they were blessed during their time in Malawi and they learned a lot from the people. He then showed a PowerPoint presentation and finished by teaching us to sing a song in Chichewa, roughly translated as, "You Are Holy Jesus."

The meeting closed with prayer by Priscilla Anderson, and we then adjourned for lunch.

Local

It was a bittersweet afternoon when the **St. Andrew's Presbyterian WMS, Kingston ON**, gathered on October 17 for a farewell tea for our dear friend and valued member, Jean Baudoux. Jean was known for serving as co-program convenor for our group for many years, faithfully visiting shut-ins, welcoming newcomers to the congregation, and providing her home for special meetings. Many participated in, and attended, this lovely event, which was followed by a time of tea. Jean has moved back to Nova Scotia and we wish God's blessing to be with her.

On Sunday, September 25, the ladies of the **WMS, Knox Presbyterian Church, Morrisburg, ON**, held their annual Thankoffering Service. The WMS members conducted the service and welcomed missionary David Pandy-Szekeres as their guest speaker. After the service, the congregation enjoyed a pot-luck luncheon and a visit with Rev. Pandy-Szekeres, who serves with the Reformed Church of the Sub-Carpathian Ukraine.

President's Itinerary

March 5–7
Life & Mission Meeting, Crieff

March 25–27
Assembly Council Meeting, Crieff

April 14
Saskatchewan WMS Annual Meeting

April 17–18
Southwestern Ontario Synodical Annual Meeting, London

April 21–22
CNOB Synodical Annual Meeting, Cobourg

April 26–28
PWS&D Committee Meeting, Toronto

Forward in Faith

As I write this article, it is the beginning of January, and I am just preparing to remove my Christmas tree and all the household decorations that were placed so carefully in early December. I know I should write with Spring in mind but I'm stuck in early January.

This is a difficult time of the year as we finish with all the excitement of Christmas, and head into the Winter days of January and February. It is easy to feel downhearted, and a little glum. I have to give myself a shake to remind myself that this is a time of new beginnings, too. The Christ Child was born to give new hope and a new covenant of love in the world, and we have a chance at the start of a new year to give ourselves a new beginning too.

Do not let yourselves become sad and glum. Take hold of some new resolutions and think of some new ideas.

Invite new people into your WMS group. Offer group members a drive. Rearrange the meeting agenda. Do something fun. Bake a new cake recipe for your refreshments and let your group be your guinea pigs. Read from a different version of the Bible. Try a new devotional. Tell a joke and get your group laughing. Think of a new project to help, and so on ….

Women of the WMS are devoted and constant women who have held their groups, and sometimes their congregations, together for up to 100 years. If you are planning to do something to commemorate that 100 years, let us know. Tell us about the celebration— when and where it will be and if others are invited. The WMS office can share your news and spread the word for you.

Be strong, be faithful and be excited. May you find the blessing of God in your day-to-day life and in the people you meet.

Janet Brewer

Mission Awareness Sunday

April 29, 2012

Theme: Walk the Walk

Text: Luke 4:14–21

Author: Rev. Arlene Onuoha

www.wmspcc.ca or 1-800-619-7301

Remembering

Elizabeth Landess Harrison
Calvin Presbyterian
Church, Abbotsford BC

Alma Steckley
Doris McKillican
Florence Murray
St. Andrew's WMS,
Barrie ON

Elizabeth Lummiss
Knox Presbyterian Church
Women, WMS
Cannington ON

Helen Grace Stewart
Seaway-Glengarry WMS,
St. Matthew's
Presbyterian,
Ingleside, ON

Ella Axford
Elizabeth Bulmer
St. Andrew's WMS,
Kingston ON

Dorothy Illingworth
Esson WMS, Oro ON

Helen Allum
Helen Dahms
Grace Pirie
St. Andrew's WMS,
Kitchener ON

Mary McCallum
Sally Jenkins
New St. James,
London ON

When sending in your names for In Remembrance, please type the names when possible. Submission can be sent by regular post or email to Gladtidings@presbyterian.ca. Due to the publication's timeline, please note that submissions may not appear in *Glad Tidings* for 2–4 months.

Correction notice: The name of Elizabeth Lummiss was incorrectly spelled in the In Remembrance section of the January/February *Glad Tidings*. It appears corrected in this month's edition. We apologize for this error.

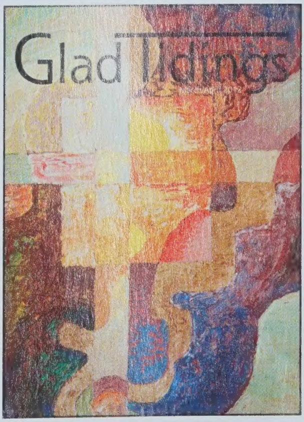
Pass Me Along

Please help to promote *Glad Tidings* and the work of the WMS. When you have finished reading your copy, encourage:

A Sunday school teacher to read, *God's Love and Peace* and *God is With Me* (p. 8)

A young professional to read, *In the Beginning* (p. 16)

A mother to read, *Passing on the Faith* (p.10)



Whoever said, "You can't have your cake and eat it too," never heard of Gift Annuities

Gift Annuities are a way you can make a gift to the church to support the ministry of your choice and in return receive a guaranteed annual income for life, the majority or all of the income tax-free. Sound too good to be true? Call the Planned Giving Office today to learn how you can have your cake and eat it too.

What flavour of ministry would you like to support?

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In 1994, Giollo Kelly acquired a $10,000 gift annuity which she designated for the Presbyterian Church Building Corporation. When she died fifteen years later, Giollo had received nearly $11,000 (87% tax-free) in total payments and left a legacy of nearly $7,500 with the money remaining in her annuity account.

(The above example is for illustrative purposes only. Annuity rates and the residue available for disbursement vary.)

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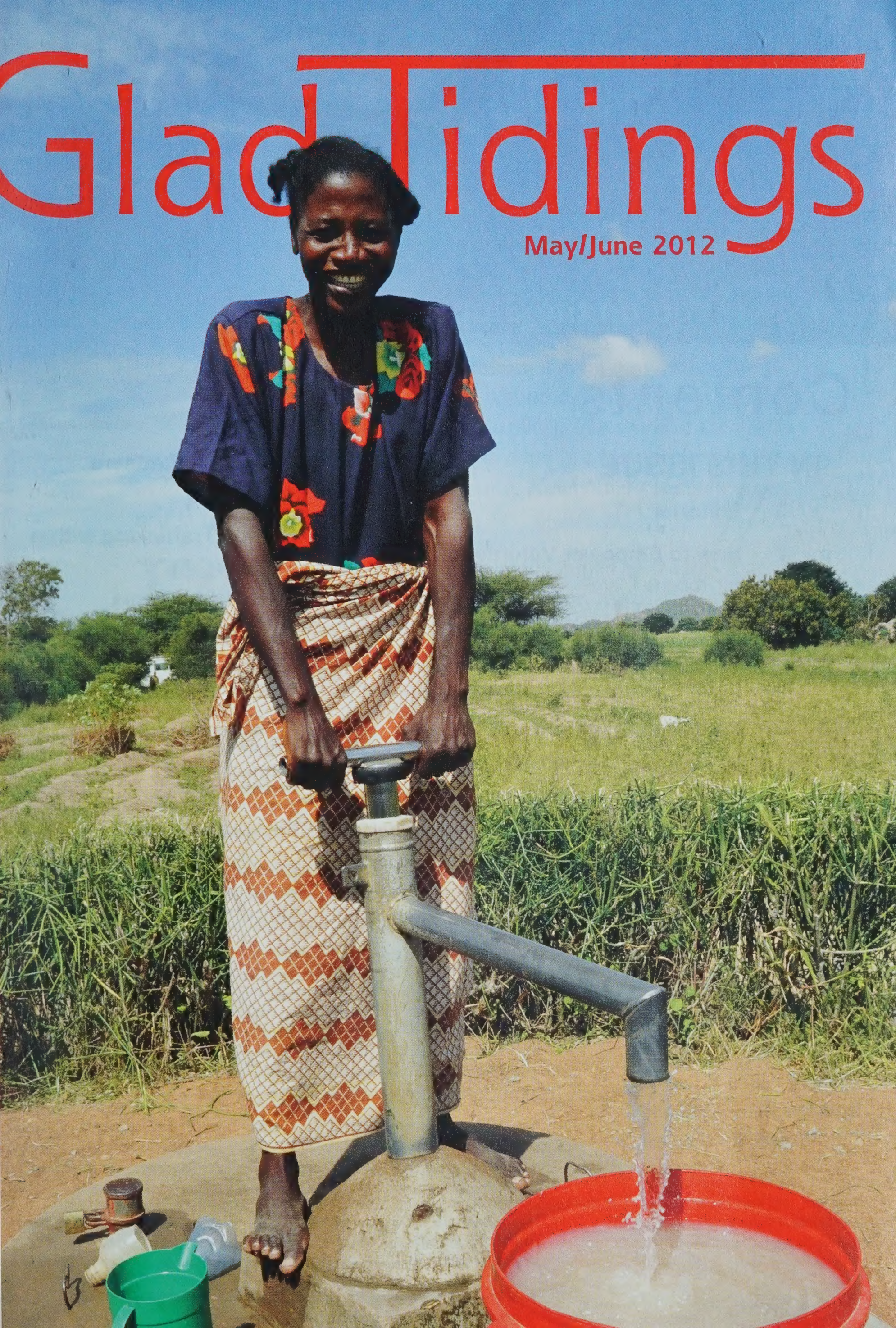
Glad Tidings

May/June 2012



4 See You on the Slopes by Kathy Ball

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CIRCULATION: Katherine Allen

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Glad Tidings reports on aspects of the Women's Missionary Society on all levels. *Glad Tidings* challenges concerned Christians to reflect on their faith through articles and reports related to mission and social justice issues, locally, nationally, and internationally. *Glad Tidings* through its content, encourages readers to become informed, educated, inspired, and motivated to action. *GladTidings* provides a forum for a broad spectrum of opinion and information, thus the views expressed in features, news reports, letters, and book reviews are not necessarily endorsed by the WMS or by the Editor.

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Editorial

As this edition of *Glad Tidings* is arriving in your mailbox, your WMS Council will be packing their things for the trip to Crieff Hills (don't forget to pack this!). For those who have never attended, the WMS Council meeting consists of wonderful moments of worship, great conversations, challenging debates, contagious energy, and inspiring speakers (not to mention, a great opportunity to purchase books and resources from Susan and Alana at The Book Room display). The work of the Society if carried out, but it is done in a beautiful atmosphere of love. It's not your ordinary meeting. Newcomers are welcomed and laughter is shared—often!

It is a great example of Christian leadership. The leaders that attend somehow manage to work together, make decisions, some that are very challenging, and still remain friends in Christ. Generally, in a room of leaders, tempers rise, but at Council there seems to be a genuine ability to want to work together for the best.

This edition of *Glad Tidings* features articles for leaders, whether you are a leader in the WMS, your community, or your congregation. Listen to God and consider what kind of leader you are. Think about new leaders around you and how you can mentor them. Consider ways you can provide meaningful volunteer opportunities for others. Learn to delegate. Learn to get involved in new issues and more meaningful ways. Stretch your leadership skills. Support others that lead around you.

Finally … pray. Pray for the groups and issues you are involved in. Pray for the leaders that surround you. Pray for our youth as they begin to, or continue to serve. And pray for your WMS Staff and your WMS Council as they meet. Pray!

So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith. Galatians 6:9–10

See you on the Slopes

by Kathy Ball

Good leaders look where they want to go and translate the dream so others are inspired to follow. The relationship between leader and follower is one of trust, encouragement, and reassurance. Recently, I took a snowboard lesson and my instructor's first piece of advice was to "look where you want to go." Even though I had never met my instructor before, trusting him was easy. He kept believing in me and reassuring me. His encouragement kept me trying past the first few bumps and bruises. His voice kept my anxiety at manageable levels. As I began each turn and just as the doubt began to set in, I heard him call "look where you want to go, Kathy, just look where you want to go." The key to success was in the eyes. Where they were focused was where I ended my turn. Each time I fell, James offered more encouragement, reassurance, and a suggestion of what I could do differently the next time. Finally, it all came together. I ended the lesson slightly more bruised, but feeling I had accomplished something quite wonderful.

Congregational leaders need to be aware of where they look, because it is, most likely, where they will end up. As in all things, the scriptures are the touchstones to test out the validity of those directions, to see where we should go.

Our denomination has a rich history of careful conversation around identifying visions for ministry, without which it could be easy to look in a wrong direction. However, we need to balance the thoughtful approach we often take, with some more immediate freedoms. We can't forget to be open to God's creative Spirit popping up in unexpected and wonderful places.

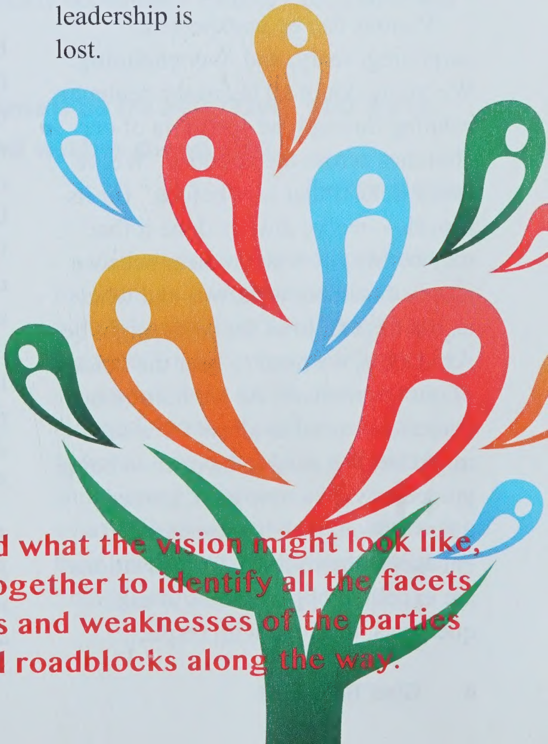
A few weeks ago, I had lunch with a minister friend. We chatted about our jobs and families and how we balanced the competing demands for our time and attention. We gave ourselves freedom to whine, just a little, about the more life-draining stuff. Then, he leaned across the table and said "you want to know what I'd really like to do with this job?" In a few short paragraphs, he outlined a vision of an amazing ministry which captured the imagination and could inspire great things. He knew exactly where he was looking and was excited to move forward. He let God's creative Spirit pop in and form his vision.

But how do we take that vision, and keep moving in the right direction? Another important part of leadership is being able to break down the steps required to achieve the vision. In the movie, *The Sound of Music*, Maria taught the children to sing by breaking singing down into simply steps—"let's start at the very beginning." By making each step easily attainable, and with constant reassurance, those children were singing in no time. Faith visions may require simple steps as well.

By definition, if there is a leader, there will also be followers. It is the leader's responsibility to present the direction, letting others see where they must go, and inspire them to move forward. In the conversations around what the vision might look like, leader and follower work together to identify all the facets of the vision, the strengths and weaknesses of the parties involved, and potential roadblocks along the way. It is within these conversations where trust and confidences can be built and shared.

Paul painted a wonderful picture of how people of faith can work and live together, how they can seek out and move towards a vision. The "Body of Christ" image assures us that each one has an equally important role, yet not everyone is a leader. The leaders in our midst possess the skills to do the work of leading, guiding, and directing, and they are the ones who need to be encouraged to step forward.

Equally important, we need to recognize the apprentice leaders and allow opportunities to grow those skills. Sometimes, in spite of careful instruction, apprentices fall. When they do, someone needs to make sure they are okay. When new leaders fall, a few suggestions about what might be done differently the next time can be helpful when offered in the spirit of gentle correction. If we are not constantly building up new leaders, any vision will be lost when the main leadership is lost.



In the conversations around what the vision might look like, leader and follower work together to identify all the facets of the vision, the strengths and weaknesses of the parties involved, and potential roadblocks along the way.

In working with new leaders, we also need to be certain to match personal interests with ministry opportunities that will strengthen the vision. It shows a respect for existing skills and affirms that person's place within the community. A few years ago, a retired bank manager offered to teach a young adult the ministry of 'treasurer'. There were potholes along the way as the mentor learned to teach, reassure, and believe in the apprentice. The young adult was well suited for the job, and gained a powerful ministry and a skill she will never lose. The leader was able to have another join him in his ministry vision. The beauty of Paul's image is that we don't all have to be good at everything.

Visions can be unexpected, surprising, scary, and overwhelming. We've no doubt all heard the sentence echoing through the corridors of our churches across the country, "We've never done it that way before." (or its flipside—we've always done it that way before). It is sad to hear because it only considers what was and what is, but never allows for what might be. As leaders, we need to hear the voices of our apprentices. As we nurture our leaders, we need to allow for what might be. We need to be open to being guided toward a new goal, toward a new vision, which embraces and enhances possibilities. Conversations are excellent opportunities to ask questions, disagree with respect, clarify visions, and reassure one another. The more different ways you look at a vision, the more complete the vision will be.

For me, my vision of becoming a snowboarder was close to collapse. What my instructor James didn't know about my lesson was it was 'do or die'. I had been toying with snowboarding for the past few years and ended last season with a mild concussion after a rather nasty fall. I was down to the wire—this lesson was it—success or I was going to sell my equipment. It took a great deal of effort on my part, along with someone who knew what he was doing and was able to reassure me every step of the way, but I did it. My snowboard isn't going anywhere.

Leadership in the church may not be at the 'do or die' phase. However, it will take effort on the part of the leaders, the apprentice leaders, the mentors and advisors, and the congregants who encourage and build up. The effort will be worth it when we embrace all the ways God is calling us to be. We will all hear ideas and dream together. We will discover those in our midst whose skills in leadership can take us to amazing places. We will be led to the tops of some pretty spectacular mountains. See you on the slopes!

Kathy Ball and her family live in the Fraser Valley in British Columbia where mountains are easily reached and fully enjoyed

How to Empower Volunteers

by Roberta Clare

Non-profit groups are leading the way in reshaping volunteerism. No longer merely well-meaning amateurs, volunteers now receive more respect and recognition than they did 30 years ago. The emphasis on well-meaning has shifted to accountability and results. Volunteers are screened, trained, and evaluated. Board members of non-profits are held accountable for specific work and objectives against which their performance is evaluated. The relationship between paid staff and volunteers is developing into one of mutuality and shared wisdom.

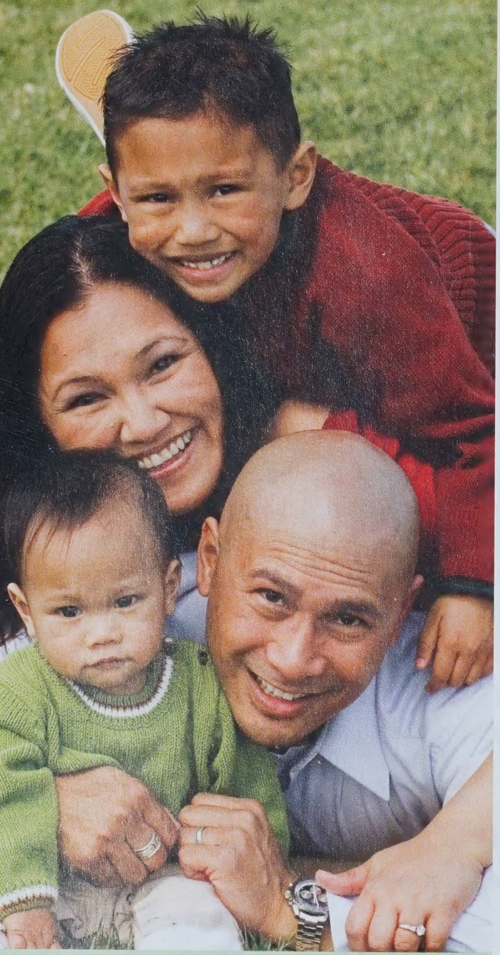
The motivation for volunteers has changed as well. The idea that we serve out of duty or support of a just cause is quickly becoming a hallmark of generations past.

> **"If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito."**
>
> **Betty Reese**

How to motivate volunteers

Adapted to today's context of volunteerism, the children's storybook, *The Little Engine That Could*, might look something like this: In the first picture, the engine toots, "I think I can." In the second picture, the engine groans with determination, "I know I can." And, in the final picture, the engine shouts, "Hey, what's in it for me!"

Although the most common reason for turning down opportunities to volunteer remains, "I just don't have the time," in fact, most people are not concerned about the amount of time required, but the time they are going to waste. The first step in recruiting and keeping volunteers is to know what each volunteer wants in return for their investment of time and energy. Today's volunteers want to see:



- Accomplishment (meaningful work)
- Enhancement and use of their skills
- Measurable success
- Recognition

Volunteers make mental lists of what they want to put into every relationship and what they want to get out of every relationship. When they are no longer able to balance these lists, volunteers become increasingly frustrated, act out of their frustration (which, in turn, undermines group dynamics), and often drop-out.

Volunteers should be carefully chosen.

People are happiest when they get involved in church life at their own pace. Focus on fun. No one wants to do something just because they should or because someone needs them to do something. People do things because they want to feel good, to help others, and to have a good time with like-minded people. Share your successes. There's an old adage, "Nothing succeeds like success." Would you want to join a lost cause? Be upbeat and positive. Whenever you present a problem, always present a solution along with it.

Most non-profits draw up an agreement or contract that states the goals of the volunteer position, the time required to complete those objectives, the expected outcome, the training that is available to the volunteer, and how the work will

> **We start off doing something because we love God. But soon we are doing it because we have always done it. It is important to remember why we do things, what the spiritual purpose is—for the love of God and others.**
>
> **Lynne Baab (adapted)**

be evaluated. Typically, volunteers are interviewed using the following questions: Why does this position interest you? What skills and strengths do you bring to this position? What are some of your weaknesses? How can we help you prepare for this position? How much time do you have available for this work?

Volunteers report that the most common reason they become dissatisfied is that they have failed to achieve meaningful success as a result of their efforts. This is a result of lack of preparation for the task; inadequate and unclear instructions; and little or no training. Yes, even the most mundane tasks should include some hands-on mentoring. An ad hoc group that gathers to assemble the annual report or stuff envelopes requires training just as a pastoral care visitor or Sunday school teacher requires training. No longer should it be assumed that just because a person is volunteering, she knows how to complete the work successfully.

How to evaluate volunteers

What do we do when goals are not accomplished, volunteers' expectations are not met, and enthusiasm wanes? Regular supervision and evaluation will avoid many problems.

It is important that those who recruit and supervise volunteers stipulate from the onset how and when regular supervision and evaluation will occur. The best approach is to include a process for self-evaluation in the volunteer agreement. These questions are typically used in a collaborative evaluation process that includes self-evaluation: What is going well? Are we meeting the goals of the group, project, or program? Are your expectations and goals being met? What (if anything) is not going as well as expected? How can we work together to make this a meaningful experience? The role of the volunteer coordinator or supervisor is not to over-supervise and micro-manage, on the one hand, nor to allow a volunteer to go adrift and run-amuck, on the other.

"I would never join an organization that has people like me as members."
Groucho Marx

Many problems and conflicts can be averted by checking-in with intentionality on a regular basis. If a mismatch between volunteer and position is discerned, placement in another position more suited to a volunteer's skills may be a reasonable course of action. Volunteers must always be invited to evaluate the program or project and their role in it, and suggest other areas in which their gifts may be used.

How to keep volunteers

Burnout is one of the most common reasons volunteers drop-out. No one is expected to devote every waking hour to ministry—not teaching elders (ministers), ruling elders, lay leaders, or the folks in the pews. The coordinator of volunteers, or the ruling elder, who provides pastoral support to volunteers, should encourage each volunteer to maintain a balance of personal time, exercise, prayer, worship, and family time. This will increase the well-being and contentedness of the volunteer that, in turn, will nurture a healthy group dynamic and reduce frustration.

Suggest to volunteers that they take time off from serving if they get overtired. The 2 ½ hat rule is a helpful strategy to fight "hardening of the ought-eries." Volunteers, whether ruling elders on the session or lay leaders, should wear no more than 2 ½ hats: one hat to convene a committee, a second hat to participate fully on a committee, and half a hat to participate only on an occasional basis on a third committee.

As a rule of thumb, if you don't have enough volunteers and there's no energy or passion about a project, don't do it. The, "but we've always done it this way," is likely to back-fire. Appealing to a sense of duty, guilt, or judgment are manipulative tactics that should be avoided at all costs.

How to promote volunteers

We are called to build God's kingdom by empowering leaders. Volunteers should always be given the opportunity to let go of a task and move on to something else. This will keep a volunteer motivated and help to avoid burnout. When there is a volunteer who proves to be capable of a particular task, it is important to help her see herself as capable of doing work that entails more skill and responsibility. The ability to identify a person's strengths is a characteristic of good leadership.

Honest feedback, free of pressure or guilt, will empower others to take leadership. Avoid the common ploy, "I don't know what will become of us if you don't take this position." Remember, evaluate, evaluate, evaluate. How is she doing with this new task? Would she like to continue or try something new?

How to show appreciation for volunteers

Nothing can replace a "thank you" for time and effort devoted to the work of ministry. It is important to know something about the volunteer's personality and preferences before offering a reward. Some people find great pleasure in seeing their name in print. For others, public recognition is most meaningful. A thoughtful, handwritten note of appreciation (not a quick email) indicates that time and effort have been taken to offer sincere gratitude. Each of us can relate to the voice of *The Little Engine That Could*, "What's in it for me?" Most often that need can be met by offering heartfelt thanks that says, "You are important to us."

Our Christian communities are sustained by the scores of women and men who volunteer endless hours humbly and meekly out of a sense of calling to build God's kingdom in service to Christ. I offer two final pieces of advice and words of encouragement. First, bear in mind that the skills volunteers use to earn a living are not necessarily the spiritual gifts out of which they are called to serve in the church. I have encountered business people whose spiritual gifts are not exercised on the Board of Managers, but in the Sunday school, and teachers who dread being asked to teach on their "day off." They come to church to fulfill their spiritual needs, not serve out of personal and professional resources that are already over-taxed.

The most important advice to leaders who want to nurture their faith communities is this: Attend to the spiritual needs of volunteers before addressing the tasks and chores that need to be done. Volunteers whose spiritual needs are met through service to Christ, and are acknowledged and honoured by the faith community will become mentors in faith to others, and in turn, empower future leadership. In the difficult times we live, these volunteers are living examples of what it means to lead meaningful and spirit-filled lives.

Roberta Clare is the Director of The Elders' Institute, St. Andrew's Hall. The Elders' Institute, a national leadership training program for ruling elders and lay leaders, provides workshops on how to find and keep volunteers and many other topics. The Elders' Institute is a ministry of St. Andrew's Hall, Vancouver, and can be reached at www.eldersinstitute.ca or 1-866-794-8888.

> **"Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."**
>
> **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

LAY-ING MINISTRY ON THE LINE

by
Jessica
Foy

It was in 1998, while standing in the massive auditorium of Purdue University at the Triennium conference, that I realized God was far more important to me than I had previously thought. It was while we sang the song Sanctuary that it really hit me; I was filled with the desire to be who God wanted me to be. At the time I had no idea what that meant or the implications for my life, but I knew that I wanted to pursue that and see where God would take me. That was the moment when I opened myself up to God and began the difficult task of listening for His voice. This wasn't the beginning of my faith journey, but that moment transformed it into something new.

I had been in The Presbyterian Church in Canada my whole life, but this was the first time I would truly take my faith on as my own. Not that of my parents, my role models, or even my minister, but mine. Learn who I was in relation to God and who God was calling me to be. Upon further investigation, I have learned that God was calling me to ministry and at this moment, it is of the youth variety. If you are willing to continue, I'll take you along the path that brought me to where I am at today and some of the things I've learned along the way.

An individual cannot have a self-altering instant and not look back to see how one arrived at that place; who led the way and ponder God's place in it all. I arrived at that moment because of the long line of familial

These are the types of moments I attempt to foster in my youth ministry—moments when teens can genuinely be who God created them to be.

Presbyterians that went before me. I joined the church while in grade seven knowing that I was a child of God, had faith, and adored the youth group. The youth group was such a joy for me as a teenager and I still look back on those events with great fondness. Those experiences and the people who surrounded me are one of the main reasons I do youth ministry today.

The Church and the youth group were a haven for me; where I didn't need to prove myself or worry about my peers. I was able to be my honest self and create friendships with others who wanted to dive deeper into their faith. These are the types of moments I attempt to foster in my youth ministry— moments when teens can genuinely be who God created them to be, to delight in a relationship with Christ, burst with the Holy Spirit, and try and gain a greater sense of how they should live in relation to God and what the bigger picture looks like.

I owe a lot to my leadership training within the Presbyterian Young People's Society (PYPS). At PYPS, youth are given the chance to lead one another and grow in faith. On more than one occasion we failed and things didn't run as smoothly as they ought to. The upside is that we were blessed to have adults supporting us, ready to help pick up the pieces, and show us how to learn from our mistakes. I believe God's mercy is similar to this. He knows that as humans we are quite capable of stumbling along the way, but even with that knowledge, God is merciful and provides other opportunities for people to teach us and gives us the strength that only comes from God. My journey also involved experiences with Christian camping at Camp Kintail, and summer experience at Glen Mhor Camp.

Those summers taught me much about who I am and what it is to live and work in a Christian community. I gained a greater understanding of what it means to work together as the body of Christ and learn self-care, understanding, and forgiveness. These are some of the keys that I believe create a healthy ministry team. As the body of Christ, we need to remember that we cannot do everything ourselves; we need to be open to the gifts found in every team member. I offer gifts of humour, creativity, compassion, organization, authenticity, and the arts. These do not include logistics, being direct, or office administration. Knowing this, I can surround myself with people, who fulfill these roles and complete the whole package.

After university, I was given the opportunity to lead a youth group for South Gate and Chalmers congregations in Hamilton. I was responsible for coordinating the weekly youth group events and involvement in worship leadership. The 24 hours that I spent each month with that group were a blessing, but as the years stretched on I had the itch to do more. I wanted to be involved with more than Sunday evening youth events. I went to Teacher Leader Conferences and learned about other elements of youth ministry that I desired to be a part of. Since those elements were not an option in this position, I proceeded to explore the opportunities held at Erskine Presbyterian Church in Hamilton.

While at Erskine, I was responsible for most of the ministries for those under forty. The key when starting a ministry position is to find a group of stakeholders who will offer support to you and your area of ministry. Lay Ministry isn't always easy, but knowing others are by your side makes the journey so much smoother. This was my experience when I arrived at Erskine. I was encouraged to try new youth initiatives, be creative in worship, get the young adults together, and be myself throughout it all. I am currently feeling this same support at Knox Oakville, where I serve as the youth leader.

This encouragement over the years, in combination with the Princeton Forums on Youth Ministry, created a real thirst for knowledge.

Knowing that others believe in my abilities makes me want to improve upon them and to be ready and able to nurture the encounters for youth that I aspire to offer. I want to learn from the "best of the best," what other leaders are doing in their congregations, and how we can work together to further the Kingdom. Travelling to Princeton each Spring is a time of not only learning, but also to recharge my batteries and take time for me. Many struggle with giving too much of themselves to those they minister to and with, but we must all keep in mind that if we aren't at our finest then what do we have to offer? It is all about finding balance in our ministries, relationships, and personal needs.

At Canada Youth 2009, I was able to work alongside some of my most treasured friends and mentors. I was asked to sit on the Worship Committee and coordinate the drama for our daily services. I have many years of drama experience and was sure I could act, but to write, direct, and intimately mentor a group of youth was something I was unsure of. I had no sensible reason to feel this way, but others had faith in my abilities, so I soldiered on and prepared for the conference. That experience changed my life and its direction. I was given the confidence that only a sureness in God's gifts could bring. This was the time when I truly saw just what talents God had bestowed upon me. We get told so often we are good at this or that, but those comments do not always register. When it is God telling you that you are gifted and that you must take those talents and go forth in a new direction, you finally hear it. And I finally heard my call at its very loudest.

God is
gracious,
loving, and
merciful.

I am not sure I could attempt to live a life of faith without the knowledge and love of Christ. Knowing about God is one thing, but knowing His Son and having a relationship with Him is another. Most of what I know about God has been personified through Jesus. God is gracious, loving, and merciful. This is the God we are shown through Christ's life and resurrection. That life is what I use to gauge my own. I know I'm unable to be precisely like Jesus, but I do pray that my faith and work helps to show others his grace, love, and mercy. The joy that comes from this knowledge is immeasurable and passing that along to another is a real gift and what I hope to give youth through the ministries I deliver. The gift was given to me years ago while I was surrounded by six thousand other youth at Triennium taking my journey in a whole new direction.

10 Ways We Can Equip Our Youth for Leadership

by Rebecca Jess

They say that leaders are born, not made. But I'm not so sure Moses would agree. In fact, I'm not so sure most of the people we meet in the Bible would agree—how many times do we read about people saying to God, "Are you sure you want me to do this? Are you sure I'm your best option? There must be others who are better or more qualified than me." Undeniably, there are those with a certain flair for leadership; we think of them as shining stars with their natural charisma and ability to facilitate without a hint of apprehension. This doesn't mean that the rest of us aren't cut out for leadership; God pushes and pulls us into positions we never thought we could handle. God knows our potential, our strengths, our gifts, and God gives us courage to use them, even when we least expect it. Anyone can be a leader.

As a camp director (and long-time camp staff member), I have seen children and youth grow to become incredible leaders. One of the things we believe strongly at camp is that the world needs extraordinary leaders. So, if few are born leaders, how do we equip our children and youth to be the extraordinary leaders we need in this world?

There are numerous ways that we, as adults, mentors, teachers, and leaders, can help to develop the qualities that make excellent leaders out of our children and youth. Sometimes the difficulty is where to start. Here are 10 easy ways to begin. These ideas can be fit into lessons, classes, conversations, events, camps, and play time; they are the tools that we use at camp everyday and are a huge part of how we work to make great leaders.

1

Create a Safe Environment

Stepping up and taking leadership can be scary; our kids need to feel safe before they will take risks. Create a safe environment by helping youth get to know each other and the adults they are working with. Let children know that they will always be supported and can ask questions or get help at any time. And then follow through—be there for them and support them when they need you.

2

Communication

Teach youth how to communicate well with others. This means teaching obvious skills like listening, making eye-contact, and taking turns, as well as the harder ones like expressing your feelings, sharing opinions, ideas and concerns, and accepting everyone's ideas as valid. When kids get silly, it's easy to brush off their crazy suggestions, but we also have to look deeper and see if this communication barrier exists because the child doesn't feel safe enough to share a real idea or, if simpler forms of communication need to be worked on before moving into the harder, more serious ones.

3

Listen to Their Ideas

They may be young and inexperienced, but kids are always thinking. Give your youth chances to provide ideas, opinions, and stories. And then, give them feedback, but not until you've heard them out! Listen to their concerns, too; talking to an adult about something that doesn't feel quite right, or providing a suggestion, can be really nerve-wracking when you are young. Be sure to give kids opportunities to be heard by adults, and then show them you care and think they are important by *really* listening.

4

Provide Opportunities to Lead

Even very young children can be leaders if we let them. One of the best ways to become a good leader is through practice, so give kids opportunities to lead; they will discover how to fine-tune their skills from their own trial and error, adult support, informal feedback, and reactions from their peers. Don't be afraid to start with simple requests: ask a child to explain the rules of a game to the group, or ask a young person to gather some people and set up a simple activity.

5

Hand over Responsibility

Leadership and responsibility go hand-in-hand; another way to allow our youth to practise leadership is by giving them appropriate levels of responsibility. As adults, what makes this difficult is that once we hand out responsibility, we must entrust it to the youth we gave it to. We have to give up that responsibility ourselves and allow the youth to take ownership. If we are always there ready to swoop in, make changes to suit our preferences, and never fully hand over the task, how will our youth learn to be responsible? Trust them.

6

Role Model and Mentor

Children and youth take their cues from the people around them. By setting the example, we show kids what being a great leader looks like and sounds like. Be sure to always say "please." Show humility and acceptance. Talk with them. And, above all, allow kids to see your mistakes and how you appropriately deal with them and learn from them.

7

Play with Them

Leadership doesn't only exist in serious situations; leaders can develop their skills from playing games, singing songs, teaching rules, and choosing teams. By playing together, you and your youth work as a team and solve problems in action. You also develop a stronger sense of community, and being able to successfully live and work in a real-life community is an important leadership quality, especially when so many of our children now build their communities online.

We, Not Me

The best leaders are not in it for themselves—they know that everyone else comes first and do whatever they can to ensure their success. Please, teach your youth about compassion. By feeling for others we lend ourselves to a richer, more meaningful

life. Show kids you care and help them dedicate their energy to others. Help them see that when you concern yourself with the welfare of others, people are ready to respond with that care. And, of course, by doing this, we lead a life more like Christ.

Integrate These Tools

A sit-down lesson on how to be a good listener isn't going to go very far with a kid; integrate these ideas into what you already do. When someone isn't listening, stop the group and quickly brainstorm together ways to show you are listening, and then practise those skills as you continue your discussion. Many leadership skills can be taught through games, activities, or team-building initiatives—get interactive when developing your leaders.

Volunteering at a soup kitchen can get them to be active in the community, see them communicate with new people, provide them with a sense of responsibility, and teach them compassion; that's at least four leadership skills being used in one activity! To help your youth understand that they have succeeded at specific skills, always take time to set expectations (Before volunteering, say something like, "when we volunteer at the soup kitchen, we expect you to show responsibility by ... ") and debrief at the end by discussing what they did well, where they could improve, and if their perspectives as leaders have changed because of this experience.

Tell Them They would be Great Leaders

You have the tools to equip and nurture your youth, but the best way to get them hooked on developing their skills and growing is to simply tell them they would make a great leader. One of the major reasons I stuck with camp for so many years is because I was told as a camper that I would make a good counsellor one day. Knowing that people I respected—and who, in my eyes, were some of the most incredible camp staff ever—thought I was leader material was an incredible feeling. From that moment forward I knew I would do whatever it took to become an amazing counsellor. One of the simplest and most effective ways to start building young leaders is to let them know that you see great potential in them—tell them they would make great leaders!

The future of our camps, our churches, and our world lies in the hands of our children and youth. Give them the tools and we will have compassionate, accepting, motivated, creative, respectful, and open-minded leaders ready to take this world full-steam ahead. And when they have Christ as the example of perfect leadership, imagine how far our kids can go. We want our children and youth to know that they can represent Christ, lead the way, inspire others, and make a difference in many areas of the world—be sure to tell them that they can.

The Best Leaders are Followers

by Vivian Carter

We all have names. Names are very powerful. One of the worst hate crimes we know of is to steal someone's name. In history, evil has tried to erase names by reducing them into numbers in an attempt to dehumanize living souls, but that can never really work, because it is *God alone who names us*, deeply ... remarkably.

Some names tell you who a person is, what she or he does, or what sets them apart. The Sacred names and renames people all the time—usually to mark a significant change in their identity. God renamed Sarai into Sarah, Jacob became Israel, and Jesus' mother Mary will be called "Blessed," but for me the most telling "namings" of all are the many evocative names of Jesus. Jesus is called the Alpha and the Omega (the first and the last), The Prince of Peace, Joshua (in Hebrew, "the One who saves"), the Messiah or Christ (the Anointed One), and my favorite, "supposing him to be the 'gardener'," presumably for the second Eden (John 20:15b).

In Joyce Rupp's book, "*Fragments of Your Ancient Name*," she explores 365 different names for the Trinity. For example: Mother of the Weary, Nourisher, Story Teller, Companion of the Lonely, Dwelling Place, and Emmanuel—God with Us.

So, if we as Christians are to be "followers of Christ" then my question to you is this, which identity of Christ are you meant to follow? We are called to follow Christ—as fully human and divinely inspired. We are created in Christ's image and called to leadership. So, what is your divine name and how does it affect you as Christ's follower and a leader in the faith?

God sings a song of love into all people, unique to each of us and where God dances in our lives is where our calling *sings*. Staying true to what God imagined in you is your life's calling.

But the questions are always the same: How do we authentically

"We are not God, we are simply the image of God and our task is gradually to discover that image—and set it free."
Michael Quoist

"follow" Jesus? And who *is* Christ for us? For someone who is lonely, Christ might be a *companion* (the one who literally shares bread for the journey). Jesus might be a *protector* for those who are marginalized or threatened. For those who have never known unconditional love, Jesus might be for them *love incarnate*.

If Christ is love incarnate for us then we must find the unique ways in which God gifted us to be love incarnate to the world. And if Jesus is a companion to us, then we must ask ourselves in which ways might we be "bread" for other's spiritual journey. This is the Eucharistic echo of sacred love and action.

Look at how Jesus sees, calls, and then *renames* people in the unique and relevant language of his listeners.

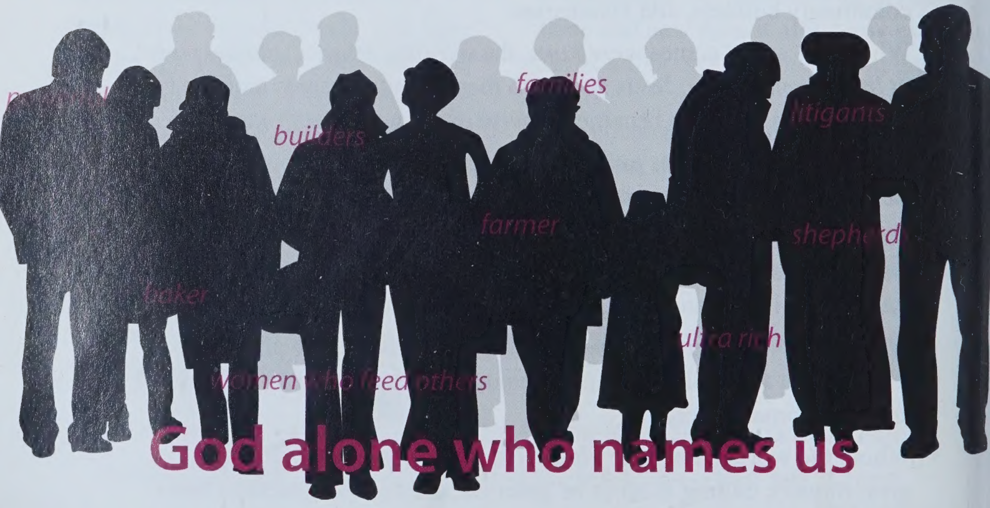
- Whom the world names *builders*, Jesus speaks to them about foundations, calling them to become their true sacred selves and be renamed as builders, supporters, and a level ground for the community.
- Whom the world names *farmers*, Jesus speaks to them about seeds, sowing, weed-seeds, soil, and rocks, calling them to be nurturers, protectors, and life-givers.
- Whom the world names *night watchmen, insomniacs* and *those who are waiting*, Jesus speaks to them about lamps, calling them to become illuminating guides, visceral warmth in the world, and providing dynamic energy.
- Whom the world names *bakers* and *brewers*, Jesus speaks to them about yeast and leavening, calling them to become encouragers, community builders, and visionaries.
- Whom the world names *merchants*, the *wealthy, thieves*, and the *poor at the judgment gate*, Jesus speaks to them about treasures hidden and pearls, calling them to become the wise ones and the truth-keepers.
- Whom the world names *millers*, Jesus speaks to them about millstones, calling them to be prophets.
- Whom the world names *those who preserve fish* and *women who feed others*, Jesus speaks to them about salt, calling them to be renamed as steadfast, reliable, and honest.
- Whom the world names *shepherds*, Jesus speaks to them about lost sheep, gates and wolves, calling them to be guardians of the vulnerable and to become seekers.
- Whom the world names the *ultra rich*, Jesus speaks to them about great dinners, calling them to be gracious, giving, and generous hosts.

- Whom the world names *litigants* and *lawyers* and *families*, Jesus speaks to them about mercy and a mothers' type of unconditional love, calling them to become merciful, loving, courageous, and loyal.
- Whom the world names *legalists*, Jesus explains that the kingdom is among them and that children have a better understanding of God, calling them to be renamed as pure and bringing hope.
- Whom the world names *kings* and the *powerful*, Jesus speaks to them about servants and children, calling them to be innocent, helpful, and civil.
- Whom the world names as *forsaken*, Jesus speaks to all of us about paradise, renaming us transcendent.

Each one of us has a calling—a divine dispatch—that only we can complete. And each of us helps to animate the Body of Christ (Rom 12: 4–6).

Ask yourself this: Which Bible story speaks to you the most? Reflect and meditate on whom Jesus is speaking to and perhaps what new name might be given? What is your divine leadership skill? What is your authentic name?

Never underestimate the leadership power of just one. Jesus changed the world. If you follow your true calling by following the image of Christ who calls to you, you too can be the change in the world that brings about love and reconciliation. Your acceptance of your authentic personhood is a vocation. And it is undoubtedly a form of leadership. I urge you to listen to your unique



calling and embrace it.

How can I know what my vocation is, you ask? Ask those around you what it is that they appreciate in you. What is it that they admire about you? What is it that you do really well? Now ask yourself, what of those answers brings you sacred joy? What is it that you do really well that makes your heart sing above all else?

It has been said that divine love is "where your greatest joy/passion meets the world's greatest need." What is your greatest joy or passion? "The place God calls you to is where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." (Frederick Buechner)

It is not always the easiest thing to do—to answer a sacred calling, but if you can, you will be given joy beyond words. It is so comforting to know that God doesn't call the qualified. Rather, God *qualifies* the called. Jesus said over and over again to people, "Do not be afraid. Follow me." Just know this, no matter what it is that you might feel called to do, God has given you just the right amount of what it is you need to finish the work that the Sacred began in you.

You will know you are following the authentic path that you and Jesus are meant to walk when the work, the experience, and the Spiritual growth you enjoy are all life-giving to you *and* to those around you. And the more you live out this Divine commissioning the more whole you will feel and thus, you will become a living prayer. But, remember, you must also be aware. "You have a solemn obligation to take care of yourself, because you never know when the World will need you." (Rabbi Hillel, 30 B.C.–9 A.D.)

I encourage you to allow God to take you to those strange, unexpected, and unfamiliar places. If the journey enlivens you and those around you, I believe that there is a Divine presence leading you. I have found that those who have listened carefully and reverently to the guidance of the Spirit are always taken to places and ministries that they could never have foreseen.

We best lead by following that part of God that we are most connected to. And so, it would seem, *the best leaders are followers*. The best leaders follow God and his calling on their life.

So, be a "walking church" like Christ. Meet people where they are. Offer them your gifts of the Spirit in your own unique way. You don't need a title, a degree, a station, an office, a salary, or even recognition. Offer yourself to the world as one person, one situation at a time. That stranger is Christ Himself who is in your presence.

I urge you to follow, and use all of your gifts. Unwrap them now.

Vivian Carter, BFA, M. DIV., Dip. Th., is a meditative writer, artist and, Anam Cara (soul friend).

Ode to a Kitchen Tap

by Barb Summers

Have you ever danced with joy, while turning on the kitchen tap to get a glass of water? Have you ever sung with gratitude, while washing your hands? Have you ever offered up a prayer in thanksgiving for your bathroom?

Probably not.

I haven't either—but we should. And this is why ...

Lydia Maganga used to walk over 6 km to collect water from an open pond. It was the same pond that animals drank from and waded in, and people washed in. It was the closest access to water—and the family suffered for it. Waterborne diseases and illness were all too common.

Today, Lydia and many others in her village in northern Tanzania collect water from a new well. Installed, thanks to gifts from Canadians to Presbyterian World Service & Development, the new well and the many program initiatives to improve health and well-being have had a dramatic impact on Lydia and her entire community.

When I visited Lydia's village earlier this year, the women rushed from their homes to gather at the well to meet me. They cheered when I arrived—we were all feeling nervous and excited. They formed a circle, anxious to tell me their stories, while conveying their immense gratitude.

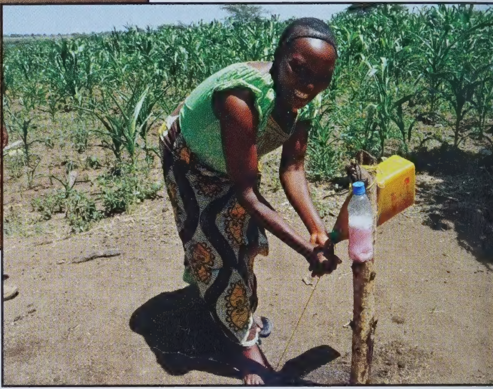
Before the program began, some women hadn't been able to keep their children in school because they had to send them out to fetch water. Some women were frequently sick and couldn't find the strength to harvest crops. Some women didn't understand how disease could be transmitted through contaminated water. It was exciting to hear their first-hand accounts of the significant improvements to their lives since the program began. They frequently burst into song, overcome with joy.

As the Communications Coordinator for PWS&D, I visited Tanzania in January in order to see the progress of our program. In areas where access to water is severely limited, we are improving current water sources, building new ones, and installing water storage tanks at schools. We are also teaching good hygienic practices and developing sanitation services.

When I travel overseas, I'm constantly reminded how much we have in Canada that is easily taken for granted. Such as a glass of clean water. Soap. And yes, even toilets. In many parts of the world, these things are luxuries.

According to the United Nations, 2.5 billion people lack proper sanitation facilities—that's nearly 50 per cent of the developing world's population. Over 884 million people still consume unsafe drinking water. Inadequate access to sanitation

Photos: (left) Family with their latrine; (below) hand washing station



services and safe water, along with poor hygiene practices, sickens and kills thousands of children every day and leads to impoverishment and diminished opportunities for countless more.

Clearly, water and sanitation are still very pressing needs. PWS&D has programs around the world working to help people access clean water, but these programs involve much more than new wells. While wells are important, they are just one piece in a much larger puzzle. In some regions, wells already exist, but they are broken or poorly managed so the water table is depleted. Our program partners establish local water committees that teach community members how to repair wells, manage them properly, and keep them working for the long-term. Not only does this provide clean water to a village, but it also empowers local people to meet their own needs. It's an effective, sustainable way to build stronger communities. And the program goes beyond clean water and teaches how to prevent diseases, like malaria, through the use of mosquito nets.

Program staff teach good hygienic practices, like washing your hands regularly to prevent illness. They install sanitary facilities like latrines. They work side-by-side with communities to address specific concerns and overcome challenges. It's grassroots, hands-on, local … and inspiring.

I had no idea just how important a new latrine would be to a family. Instead of relying on dirty, rundown community toilets, the new latrines installed through the program are private, sanitary, convenient, and odour-free. An important feature outside the latrine is a small washing station, where people are taught to wash their hands after every visit. It's a neat little contraption consisting of an old water bottle filled with soap and water attached to a string in the ground that you step on to pour the water onto your hands. It's a simple and effective way to prevent the spread of illness.

At one school I visited, the new rainwater tank was having a dramatic impact on school attendance. Students were no longer getting sick from water-borne diseases and they weren't leaving class in order to try to find something to drink. The head teacher embraced me in a big hug and said, "We've been thanking you before we even met you." As a visitor from Canada, he saw me as a representative of all the people, who have generously supported the work to install the rainwater tank, and his gratitude was overflowing. That hug was meant for all of us.

The improvements to people's lives in the communities I visited is encouraging. Of course, there's always more to do. Mathew 26:11 says, "For you always have the poor with you" and it's clear when you watch the evening news that there is still this overwhelming need in the world. Even within our own programs, one rainwater tank is not sufficient for 600 students. A community needs more than one well. But we are making progress with each water source we improve. With each mosquito net we distribute. With each latrine we construct.

In Shabuluba community where Lydia lives, the new well was completed in July of last year and it's supporting 200 families. Previously, Lydia's eight children frequently suffered from cholera and other waterborne illness, but not anymore. The clean water has helped, but the lessons in hygiene have been invaluable. The family now understands the importance of washing regularly. Lydia smiled at me and said she feels "nice and clean" all the time now. She says both she and her husband have been able to work in the fields more because their health has improved, and that means better crops, increased harvest, and more food. Her children are also attending school more frequently. Lydia's story could be the story of many families whose lives have been impacted through the generous, faithful gifts of Presbyterians in Canada to PWS&D.

You can see a short (but very cute) video of the women at Shabuluba community saying thank you for their new well at www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd/tanzania-thankyou

I'm so thankful for the work of our church in Canada and around the world. I'm thankful for our dedicated program partners, who work with passion and enthusiasm. And today, I say a special 'thank you' to God for my kitchen tap.

Barb Summers is Communications Coordinator for PWS&D.

Leading Volunteers

by Deb Toth

I really love my job. On any given Tuesday morning, when entering Lakeshore St. Andrew's Church (LSA) in Tecumseh ON, the parking lot to the west of the church is full of cars. I smile as I enter the main doors to our church facility because I know I will be greeted by the hum of three or four vacuum cleaners (some strapped on backs), while the windows are already gleaming and the floors shining as a result of the early arrival of retired teachers, farmers, a police chief, and other community leaders—even our retired pastor reports for duty.

The serious task of keeping our 14-year-old facility maintained to serve our more than 800 weekly members, adherents, and guests is taken on by these 15–25 men every week. (There is an official 30-minute meeting around a long table of muffins and cookies, accompanied by the coffee *they have prepared for themselves*, and the bantering begins … "Who's acting president today?" "Why aren't you wearing your official SASEM T-shirt," says another. (SASEM means **S**t. **A**ndrew's **S**anitary **E**ngineering **M**inistry.). Behind the bantering is a room full of hearts that are compelled to serve Christ and his church through community and sacrifice.

I am humbled by the dedication of all the giving people at Lakeshore St. Andrew's, each serving in his or her own area. In 2011, we celebrated 633 volunteers. Since January 2012, we have added to this number with an area of hospitality each Sunday after both services.

Under the leadership of the Rev. Brad Watson, I have been afforded the opportunity to attend several leadership conferences to equip me for my role as Volunteer Administrator. I am so thankful for the leaders, who are willing to share their wisdom, learnings, and insights, as well as their infectious charisma. I am thankful for the freedom under Pastor Brad to develop teams. I am happy to provide opportunities for our members and adherents to serve and grow in our God, who demonstrated to us kingdom service, and the joy that comes from serving.

The entry point for serving hearts comes in different ways:

1. Compelled to Serve
   In the SASEM story, they have been compelled (a moment where a person senses a God glance

and knows who it is that moves them towards what they do) to service. They become seasoned volunteers, who are fully engaged and have a strong team (body of Christ) ownership.

2. Identification of Spiritual Gifts
   This is a more strategic volunteer entry point for those who are also sensing God calling them to be an active part of the local church. They are unsure of their God-given gifts and their personality fit for this service. To assist people who are getting serious about serving, and don't know what opportunities are available, we walk them through a process that helps to identify these areas through a spiritual gifts survey, along with an intentional look at their life story and their natural passions, skills, and dreams.

We know that each person is unique and God has given them gifts to accomplish His purpose. (Rev 17:17) Some may use gifts to communicate God's word, others to educate God's people, others to demonstrate God's Love, and still others to celebrate God's presence (mostly through prayer).

Many of our volunteers are just coming out of introductory classes here at LSA. It is very timely because when the classes are over, people are gaining momentum for the mission and vision and for the spirit and rhythm of LSA. This is a prime time to jump into volunteering for the first time.

Have I mentioned fun? Volunteering is fun *work*! It is working alongside volunteers, who are empowered to work within their gifting. It is working alongside volunteers, who are behind the vision for the Church. It is working alongside volunteers, who own their area of service.

Speaking of fun … I have learned that celebrating volunteers is all about giving away more opportunities and quiet rewards—like a card of thanks and an embrace for a job well done. That is the volunteer's love language I have come to know, appreciate, and trust. Following hard after God, along with a community of Christ followers and inspiring leaders, makes the position of Volunteer Administrator pure joy.

The work here is never done. We are as unique in Lakeshore St. Andrew's as you are in your own church. Compelled or strategic, God is at work through you and your congregation. Keep going strong. Fill the parking lot with volunteers. Be sure your leadership is aware of those helping to drive the mission and go together. I can assure you that growth in your volunteer base, along with an attraction that humble service ignites, brings health and vitality to churches.

Deb Toth is the Volunteer Administrator at Lakeshore St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

Human Trafficking Within Canada

by Michelle E. Kim

In our society, my small yet diverse community in Toronto, and among all Canadians, social justice has become a common topic, an issue that drives everyone to look for new and innovative ways to promote justice. Corporations are emphasizing their social responsibility to their local and global community, while individuals are making intentional changes.

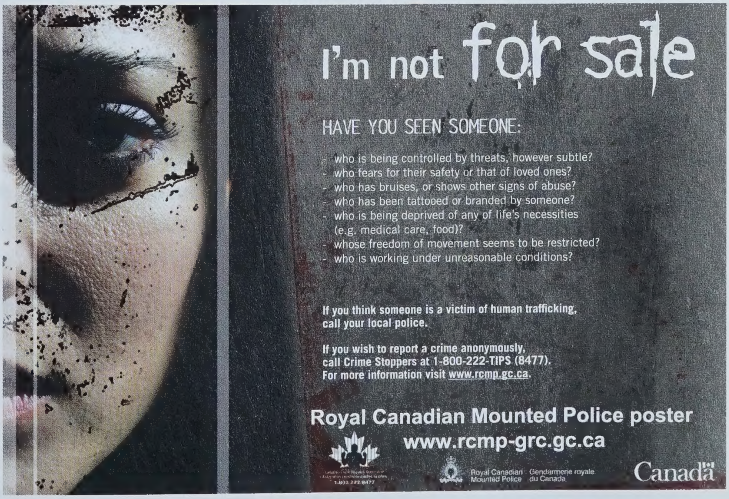
However, my fear is that this change is temporary and a quick fix to ease our guilt, when change must be sustainable. As part of the Western world, we have become accustomed to taking ownership of our belongings, our space, and our rights. Many fall under the bracket of the eight-hour workday and we separate our work life from our social life, while we also search for ways to advocate and leave a mark in this lifetime. Although this kind of lifestyle is expected and much deserved, it is a privilege and a luxury. Donating used clothing, making financial donations, and participating in campaign marathons are examples of common methods we have adopted to give back to our local community; however, does anyone give some thought regarding the effectiveness of the program, system, or donation. I am absolutely not under-mining the importance of these contributions, but my question is how much thought, research, and particularly, follow-up, has gone into the causes you are contributing to. Making charitable donations does not mean our social responsibility has been fulfilled.

Advocacy is undeniably an essential aspect of our social responsibility. To be an advocate, it is important to be constantly asking questions and to not be afraid of pushing the limits. Never underestimate the ripple effect a contribution can make, however big or little you define the action to be. A constant curiosity is difficult to maintain when we live in a place where everything is easily accessible. Child poverty, building literacy, and constructing communities are the most talked about issues today, but what about the issues that we tend to ignore, issues that make us a little uncomfortable? What about the issue of slavery, a well-integrated problem in our society that causes distress in dialogue and that many try to avoid?

In this article, I hope to share my heart of advocacy through my journey of understanding the specific issue of Human Trafficking through a language where words are limited and emotions can never be quite articulated in exactly the way I want.

Glad Tidings, in both the November/December 2009 and May/June 2010 issue, introduced the concept of slavery that is thought to have been abolished, but is still happening today. Today, it is more commonly referred to as Modern Day Slavery and/or Human Trafficking. According to the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, "Human Trafficking is a crime against humanity. It involves an act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring, or receiving a person through a use of force, coercion, or other means, for the purpose of exploiting them." The most commonly known form of Human Trafficking is the sex trade especially from or within the South-East Asian countries. Whether it is domestic or global trade, this industry is one of the fastest growing and most profitable industries, just behind the drugs and weaponry industry. The other aspect of Human Trafficking that is not given near enough attention is the Human Labour Trafficking Industry. From the large-scale corporate sweatshop to the individual debt bondage, Human Labour Trafficking is an aspect of Human Trafficking that is always in the shadows of the sex trade.

Many express the idea of Human Trafficking to be foreign, exotic, and rare. Unfortunately, the Human Trafficking of women, children, and men is happening on Canadian soil, even in our own backyards. It is certainly known to be happening in my area, in Toronto. Perpetrators and victims of the Human Trafficking industry are either blinded by their greed and lust or the fear of their life. Once a part of this cycle of trade, it is unimaginably difficult and complicated to escape. In March 2010, The Royal Canadian Mounted Police published the "Human Trafficking in Canada" report which summarizes the seriousness of people, who are trafficked into Canada or through Canada to other regions from all over the world.



HAVE YOU SEEN SOMEONE:

- who is being controlled by threats, however subtle?
- who fears for their safety or that of loved ones?
- who has bruises, or shows other signs of abuse?
- who has been tattooed or branded by someone?
- who is being deprived of any of life's necessities (e.g. medical care, food)?
- whose freedom of movement seems to be restricted?
- who is working under unreasonable conditions?

If you think someone is a victim of human trafficking, call your local police.

If you wish to report a crime anonymously, call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477). For more information visit www.rcmp.gc.ca.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police poster
www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca

However, the most ignored aspect of the report, "Human Trafficking in Canada", are the Canadians who are being trafficked within our own country, especially from the Aboriginal population. The Aboriginal population in Canada is a particular target due to the high level of poverty and the desperate financial situation. Human Trafficking often starts with a promise of prosperity. Once an individual has been lured into the industry of prostitution, it is not until he or she has developed a relationship with their perpetrator that the individual is in danger of being trafficked. The RCMP report identifies the barriers caused by the "Stockholm Syndrome." The Stockholm Syndrome is when the individual being prostituted and/or trafficked develops positive feelings towards his or her abuser and negative feelings toward authorities. This developed emotional bond is explained as a survival strategy; however, it creates a major barrier for authorities. Personal testimonies are the best sources of evidence to criminally charge perpetrators; however, there is a lack of cooperation from victims due to the emotional bond that has been formed. Due to the emotions of vulnerability and manipulation that are enmeshed in this industry, the organized crime of human trafficking within Canada is rapidly increasing and is difficult to predict.

Yet, there have been breakthroughs in Canada on the issue of Human Trafficking. Member of Parliament, Joy Smith, has spearheaded major changes regarding this issue. There have been hopeful and encouraging changes made by individuals worldwide; however, Canada has fallen behind on ensuring stricter punishment and consequences. As individuals, simple contributions like keeping your friends and family accountable by staying informed can be the beginning of permanent and major changes. Do not under estimate the power of small talk; get to know your neighbour(s) and local service providers. Make intentional changes in your purchases; know where your clothing is being sewn and the farmers who are growing your coffee beans. Small and intentional changes can go beyond what the eye is capable of seeing.

Michelle E. Kim: "I am an individual who is trying to find my own footsteps in the world of advocacy and human rights. Through faith, I have come to understand the true meaning of love and justice, and with faith I will continue to fight for the muted and ignored voices around the world."

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."
2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Reviews

reviewed by Colleen Wood

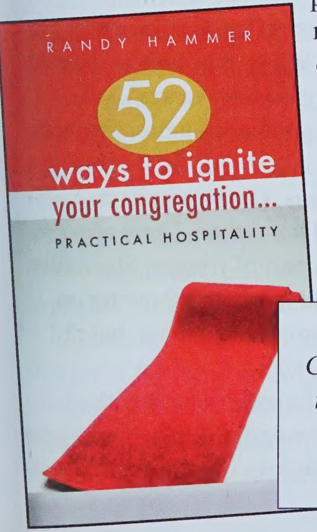
52 Ways to Ignite Your Congregation … Practical Hospitality

by Randy Hammer

I was interested in this book because I do think hospitality to the stranger is poorly done in many of our congregations. I also wondered if the "52 Ways" might translate to our WMS groups. Could this book help our WMS groups to grow as they learn to reach out and provide better hospitality?

Certainly, this book offers lots of practical suggestions, and tries to set a foundation in place before we even begin to reach out to others. Hammer suggests that we understand our own purpose before we even go beyond our doors. I think this is great advice, but remember that if we create this, we need to remember this, and work towards this. A purpose statement is only effective if it truly drives a congregation or group. For WMS groups, we have that purpose statement—perhaps we just need to review it so we are reminded of what we are welcoming others into.

In terms of the practical suggestions in this book, I found many to be common sense, but that doesn't mean we already have them in place. Hammer suggests invite a friend day, attractive signage, personal invitations, visitor parking spaces, and trained greeters, and yes, many of these are relevant to our WMS groups.



However, some of his suggestions I think might backfire. For example, he does suggest cold calling individuals to invite them to church. As a society, the phone rings so often with new offers or requests that most of us would be more likely to slam the phone down in disgust from another group disturbing our dinner! As well, he suggests a hospitality gift of a coffee mug with a picture of the church on it for visitors. I really think this might be seen as too eager, and even wasteful. Perhaps a welcome package with a church brochure, a recent copy of the church newsletter, a short welcome letter outlining current

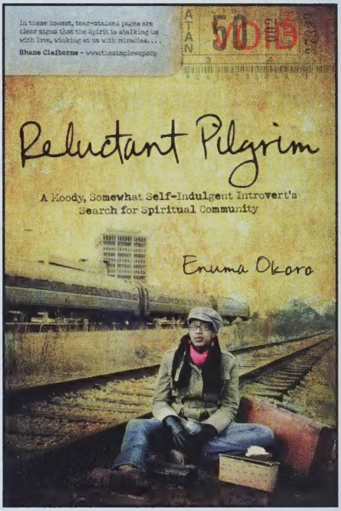
The Women's Missionary Society is a community of Christians whose purpose, in response to the love of God in Jesus Christ, is to encourage one another and all the people of the church to be involved in local and world mission through prayer, study, service, and fellowship.

programs, and perhaps a pen with the name of the church on it would be more appropriate. For WMS groups, consider giving a visitor a copy of the WMS brochure, a welcome letter with information on your WMS group, and a copy of *Glad Tidings*.

Finally, the back of this book does contain reproducible bulletin inserts for the entire congregation. These are great since a welcoming church consists of welcoming people, not just welcoming leadership.

Reluctant Pilgrim: A Moody, Somewhat Self-Indulgent Introvert's Search for Spiritual Community

by Enuma Okoro


In these honest, tear-stained pages are clear signs that the Spirit is stalking us with love, winking at us with miracles....
Shane Claiborne - www.thesimpleway.org
ATAN
50
VOID
Reluctant Pilgrim
A Moody, Somewhat Self-Indulgent Introvert's Search for Spiritual Community
Enuma Okoro

This book isn't for everyone, but perhaps it should be. I liked this book and related to certain parts, but also was saddened by some parts. I think I would describe this book as quirky. Okoro is a modern day pilgrim. Her beliefs are strong, though she freely refers to herself as a seeker. Although she has a Masters of Divinity from Duke University, her writing style has a beautifully accessible, maybe slightly messy, nature to it. It is filled with deep theology and even deeper questions. I found myself finishing a page easily, and then pausing as I realized the depth of what I had just read.

Some of her discussion with friends and associates remind me of ones I have had with friends over coffee. Can the Holy Spirit leave us, or in her words can the Holy Spirit say, "Whoa, this dude is messed up. I'm outta here." She admits that this whole faith story is pretty 'crazy', yet, "the even crazier thing is I never doubt it is true." Although she struggles, she truly is committed to her life of faith.

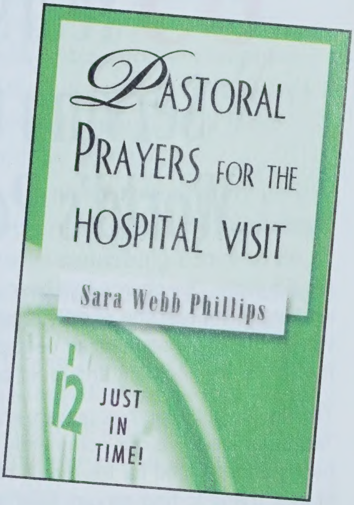
She also shared some of her challenging times with us. Okoro admits to losing her prayer life for months following the death of her father. There are also many stories of her attending churches and just being a part of fringes. She really struggles with becoming involved in a church community, not just showing up. The inability of the church community to embrace Okoro saddened me, but did not surprise me.

I know that there are many out there that share similar experiences with Okoro. Many attend a church and never connect. Many wonder if the church gets anything right. What I love about Okoro is that she still seeks out the church—

she keeps coming. Many leave the church. I think we can learn from this book—we need to be better at welcoming, encouraging, and loving the questioner, the seeker, the young adult, and the lost.

Very few books become 'keepers' for me these days—with two book-loving children, my bookshelves have been purged more than once to make room for their love of books, but for me this book is a keeper. I would certainly suggest this book for any young adult in your life and I plan to buy a copy or two for some university students I know. I also suggest this for others who want to know more about those faces that occasionally appear in our pews and often seem to disappear just as quickly as they appeared.

Pastoral Prayers for the Hospital Visit
by Sara Webb Phillips



For many of us, the act of prayer can be challenging. It can be even more challenging when praying with others in a time of crisis. Yet, it is vital! For those who volunteer in a hospital, or might be considering this calling, this is a wonderful resource. Phillips' introduction is enough for me to suggest this resource. She admits that even as a minister, she sometimes gets overwhelmed by hospital visits and is at a loss for words. She also advises how to use these prayers, by first becoming familiar with them, and second, by personalizing them—great advice! She also offers her knowledge by suggesting the best times to visit, where to sit, and respecting privacy.

A number of prayers follow the introduction, including prayers for before and after surgery, prayer for progressive illness, prayer following a suicide attempt, prayer for someone following a stroke, prayer for mourning a miscarriage, prayers for babies and youth, prayer for someone injured due to violence, and a prayer for when death is imminent. There are also prayers that can be used with the hospital staff, traditional prayers, some hymn suggestions, and some rituals. I love that each prayer also includes a scripture passage that can be read.

I have not done a lot of hospital visiting, but I think I would have appreciated this book for the times when I have. I would have used it as a resource before visiting to find a suitable scripture passage to read. The prayers, I likely would have used as inspiration for my own prayers, though I can see using them directly at very emotional times.

Happy Anniversary PWS&D!

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65 Years of Serving the World's Poor

For 65 years, our church has been actively working to support the world's most vulnerable and marginalized people through PWS&D's development and relief projects.

Thanks to your generous prayers and gifts, we've helped people like Isaac Joshua in Tanzania. Isaac's crops completely failed due to widespread drought in the region. With barely enough food for his family to eat one meal a day, hunger was persistent. At 70 years of age, trying to find enough food to feed his children and grandchildren was the last thing Isaac wanted to worry about.

"There's no more hunger in my household!"

Isaac received food rations as part of a PWS&D-supported program in his area to help families get back on their feet. Longer-term efforts are teaching how to plant drought-resistant crops and improve farming practices.

The family is now eating three good meals a day and Isaac is hopeful in this year's harvest. He's growing sorghum, corn, beans and vegetables—a nutritious variety of food for them to live and thrive.

Thank you for your faithful support of PWS&D! Together we continue to build brighter futures of hope and opportunity for our brothers and sisters around the world.

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Mission In Action

Mary Gorombey
Budapest, Hungary
New beginning? *(November 2011)*

Well, it has been a long time! I know, writing is not my strength and truth be told, I wanted to wait until I had things to write about. I have undergone some transition in my work here in Budapest and wanted to wait until things had settled down before I wrote about them.

As some of you may or may not be aware of, I am no longer working with the Refugee Ministry of the Reformed Church in Hungary. It was a tough decision to make, but also a 'no brainer' for me. There had been so many changes that I felt I could no longer be behind the goals and aims of that ministry. It was difficult to step away from five years of hard work, but I think there are new opportunities out there and God will show them to me.

Currently, I am working with a scholarship program of the Reformed Church's Aid Office. It is a program which supports school children, who come from disadvantaged background. I am helping to administer the program. Right now, I am doing the not-so-exciting task of receiving applications and entering the data into the computer. Eventually, however, I will be given the opportunity to visit with these children. Stay tuned!

I am not able to completely give up my work with refugees. Working with them is something I love to do. It is where my heart is. So I am pleased at the developments at St. Columba's Church where I am an elder. We are in the process of trying to find a way to help migrants and refugees that is unique to our situation. It is an exciting time.

Lepramisszió
Menekültmisszió
Református Iszákosmentő Misszió
Református Fiatalok Szövetsége
REFISZ
Magyar Kékkereszt Egyesület

Warmth *(February 2012)*

> Suppose a brother or a sister is
> without clothes and daily food.
> If one of you says to them,
> "Go in peace; keep warm and
> be well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs,
> what good is it? In the same
> way, faith by itself, if it is not
> accompanied by action, is
> dead. (James 2:15–17)

Dear Friends

It is a blustery cold afternoon here in Budapest, but with the grey, there is always hope for the sun.

As part of my new job of coordinating a scholarship program for children, I had the pleasure of visiting Romania and Sub-Carpathian Ukraine in January. I accompanied a journalist and a photographer to help communicate the project to potential supporters.

The word that came to mind as I reflected upon this trip was the word, "warmth." We visited a children's home in Élesd (Alesd), Romania, and were given a very *warm* welcome by the elderly couple who run the home. Not only were we welcomed, but the children, as they returned home after their schooling, were greeted with a kiss and a hug. Every one of them was asked, one by one, as they arrived home, how their day was, and what kind of marks they received—just like a regular family. It was heart-warming to see this and to meet the children, all of whom were orphaned, given up by their parents, or taken into state care. The children were very friendly, happy, and healthy, but very much hungry for our attention. We were offered a warm bowl of bean soup and walnut rolls. After this lunch, we travelled back to Debrecen where we noticed the temperature had dropped suddenly.

I had left my scarf at home and was feeling the cold, so I ran out into the city to buy a scarf and some warm socks in preparation for the next day. Until the last minute, we didn't know how we were getting to Beregszász or the itinerary for the day. My colleague, who was finalizing the details, vaguely told us the arrangements on the morning of our departure to Ukraine. We were to drive to the border, park on the Hungarian side, and walk across to the Ukrainian side where a dark-coloured car would be waiting for

Overseas Staff Birthdays

May

26 – Pauline Brown, India

June

1 – Louise Gamble, Taiwan

23 – Nathanael Taylor Allison, Cameroon

July

2 – Juan Diego Van Wissen-Zuniga, Nicargua

11 – Jeremy Alexander Van Wissen-Zuniga, Nicargua

Romanian teenagers: Mary Gorombey works with the Hungarian Reformed Church to coordinate a program that provides financial aid to help young people from Serbia, Romania, and Ukraine access education.

us. This all sounded clandestine.

Our border crossing was hilarious. A tall thin female journalist, dressed in a black coat, wearing a red beret and carrying a red handbag, an unkempt looking, dark curly haired art photographer, and myself, began walking aimlessly looking for the passport control booth. We didn't see one for pedestrians immediately, so we continued.

In the meantime, the photographer got a phone call and engaged in a personal conversation, something about a birthday party for a family member. We were about halfway to the Ukraine when a Hungarian border guard called out after us and came hurriedly toward us with a German Shepherd. "Hey, hey! Has anyone checked your documents?" "That's what we were looking for," we said. So we had to turn back and proceed to the booth where they handled documents for people travelling by cars. Once that was done, we walked to the Ukrainian side, had our documents stamped, and continued on to the black car which awaited us. It was cold, but thank goodness my feet were warm because of my new socks. It was definitely a few degrees colder in this part of the world—snow on the ground, hoarfrost on the trees, and a wind!

We were driven to a school where we met three young girls applying for the scholarship program of the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid Foundation. It was very touching to hear their stories, dreams, and wishes.

They were very sweet and were apparently the top students in their school.

After this, time was running late and we had one more story that we had to get. A single mother of four had just been evicted from her apartment. She was able to get a council flat, but it was in very bad area of town. We visited the flat. It had no plumbing, no electricity, no windows, and no heating. We were freezing, and we wondered when those young children would ever get warm. When we asked the young girl in this family how she would spend the amount she would receive with the scholarship, she said she would save some of it for herself to buy small gifts for her family and the rest she would give to her mother so that she could buy them some food. It was very touching. The warmth in that family seemed to overcome the lack of heat in the dwelling.

We returned to Budapest that evening, touched by what we had experienced during our very short visit. There is so much need and I am shocked and saddened at what communism and globalism have done to these families. This woman's parents' generation knew how to plant and harvest, bake, and heat their homes. This knowledge has been lost and we/they are now dependent on a wage to survive—a job with an employer. With the economic recession, factories have closed and now there is no work in this region. It is difficult for people to survive. I feel blessed that I have the chance to help improve the lives of these children through the scholarship program of the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid Office.

Denise Van Wissen
Nicaragua

Back in Nicaragua

Here we are back in Nicaragua and after a year it almost feels like we never left! One thing is sure; the traffic in Managua gets heavier year by year, despite the many new roads and roundabouts.

Also, attending church is a different experience now as a parent, since both my churches welcome children in their services, but neither have nurseries! Jeremy is beginning to manage to make it through mass at Batahola, and he also enjoys worship at the Moravian church. We'll try to make it to the Presbyterian home-

President's Itinerary

May 3: Council Executive Meeting, Crieff Hills
May 4–6: Annual Council Meeting, Crieff Hills
July 26: 50th Anniversary of the United Church Women's organization at Redeemer College, Ancaster ON

church this year, too.

My work at SOYNICA hasn't changed too much, but one new thing is that we've teamed up with Action Against Hunger, the Jesuit university (UCA), and another Nicaraguan NGO on a project called Innovation, funded by the European Union.

I enjoy the wide variety of activities that my work at SOYNICA involves. Helping co-workers both from the Managua and Ocotal SOYNICA teams is very rewarding. It's also stimulating to collaborate with not only health professionals, but with those in other fields, such as agriculture, communication, and education.

I recently facilitated a session on children's growth, its measurement, and data analysis with the SOYNICA Managua team and did a workshop that involved taking weights and heights, with the team in Ocotal. My sons, Diego and Jeremy, accompanied us on this trip to act as two of the children used for weighing and measuring practice.

Apart from my work at SOYNICA, I am keeping busy as a member of the Board of Directors of the Ecumenical Committee, and the organizing group of the Casa Ben Linder advocacy and activist community. I also continue to participate in regular 'Missions Roundtable' discussions, with a group of North American missionaries. We're currently struggling with ideas presented in 'When Helping Hurts' (a highly recommended book by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert on 'how to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor … and yourself'). A few of us in the discussion group are veteran 'Mission Trip' leaders, so we share our experiences with the newer ones, but we are all learning from each other!

Diego, Nelson, Jeremy, and Denise

In the Society

Synodical

Thirty women gathered at Camp Christopher for the annual **Saskatchewan Women's Camp**, which was held from September 9 to 11. The theme for the camp was, Look In—Reach Out.

Yoka de Bruijn, Dineke Kraay, and Marina Onclin reported on the Women's Gathering, held on the May long weekend (May 20–23) in Richmond Hill.

Irene Soderlund, who had been Camp Registrar since 1984, decided to step down and the Rev. Amanda Currie presented her with a prayer shawl as a 'thank you' gift. Diana Sinden has accepted the interesting task of registrar.

The weekend was wonderful, and the ladies enjoyed the wonderful meals prepared by Gerri Laing. The site was also great. Gerri was very pleased to see that the kitchen was so clean and the upgraded bathrooms were loudly praised by all. Someone also left a whole pile of firewood, ready to be used for the campfire, which was enjoyed by all. It was a wonderful event under a starry sky with lots of moon light.

Monica Asefa, a member of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Prince Albert, spoke about Zimbabwe, her home country. She showed slides and spoke about her mother's Presbyterian church in Zimbabwe, whose members are reaching out to help others in their community. The offering from the Sunday morning worship service will be sent to Zimbabwe, to the church of Monica's mom. A financial gift will also be sent to the Rev. Margaret Mullin for her work with Winnipeg Inner City Mission.

It was a memorable week-end of study, Bible study, devotions, singing, fun, and fellowship.

Presbyterial

Huron Perth Presbyterial held their annual meeting in Knox Presbyterian Church, Monkton, on the theme, Building Christian Community.

President Lois Horne welcomed everyone and gave an opening prayer; Psalm 95 was read responsively, followed by singing Praise Him Praise Him. Betty Elliot and Nancy Schneider from the Wallace branch, conducted the In Memoriam service.

Past President Bernice Richards presented a plaque of recognition to the Atwood Northern Auxiliary on their disbanding, and President Lois Horne presented each member with a beautiful rose. There was also a special presentation to the Rev. Jan MacInnes on her ordination.

Next, the Knox, North Easthope members presented a comedy skit on belonging to the WMS, and Ruth Hart presented a short review of the reading material selections available on the book table.

Huron Perth Executive

any part of the worship service. The ladies enjoyed participating in several methods of worship through dance.

Mary Simmons shared her experiences at the Look In—Shout Out National Women's Gathering held last Spring. She shared the many ways she was challenged to look at women from around the world, who suffer from hunger, abuse, lack of schooling, and finding their purpose in life. The four day conference allowed Mary opportunities to process a variety of information and she is still using this to change the way she interacts in the world.

To close the day, the Rev. Butterfield-Kocis led a meaningful Communion service.

The afternoon program began with a singalong. Lois Horne introduced the guest speaker, the Rev. Andrew Fullerton, who shared his experiences as a visiting team member of the Boarding Home Ministry in Toronto.

Everyone sang the hymn, God Forgave my Sin, and Mary Duffin closed the meeting with a prayer. Sixty members attended.

Maitland Presbyterial held their annual meeting on January 16 at St. Andrew's Church in Wingham. The Rev. Bernie Skelding offered greetings and a blessing on the activities of the day. The theme, Be Transformed, was developed effectively in the worship service led by the ladies from the Brussels WMS. The regular reports were submitted and approved.

Rev. Shelly Butterfield-Kocis was our guest speaker. She talked about the role of liturgical dance as a method of worshipping God. This may be expressed as simply as putting actions to a song or as formally as choreographing a dance to enhance

The **Presbyterial of Niagara** held its Annual General Meeting at Chippawa Presbyterian Church in January. The theme was, Let Us Love One Another! which was inspired by a photo taken at our annual retreat at Crieff Hills. Nancy Moody, the church musical director, led the singing before and during the worship service and the communion service was led by the Rev. Doug Schonberg.

President Joan Weaver welcomed everyone and constituted the meeting with prayer. Our treasurer, Bonnie Roland, reported that some groups had achieved more than their

allocation for last year. Also one group, which has disbanded, sent in extra money from a reserve account, thus our total was more than expected.

The Rev. Anne Yee Hibbs introduced the new WMS study on our mission in the Cariboo region of British Columbia. She described the differences between urban and remote areas, which affect the ways in which worship is carried out in the Cariboo. The music can be led by guitars, gatherings are small, usually in homes, and distances between meetings can be great. She recommended the study because it encouraged local groups to look for ideas as they relate their situation to the one in the Cariboo region.

Mary Lou Johnston

Lindsay Presbyterial held their Annual General Meeting on January 25 at the new facilities of Beacan Presbyterian Church in Beaverton. We were greeted at 9:30 a.m. for registration and enjoyed coffee and muffins provided by the Presbyterian Women.

The topic chosen for the year is Focus on Faith (Matthew 17:20b–21). Marie Page welcomed us on behalf of the Beacan Women. Bolsover led the morning worship on the topic, The Lord Provides, using Genesis 22: 1–14. Abraham had faith when he obeyed God and was going to offer his long awaited son Isaac, as a sacrifice … and because of his faith, “God provided a ram.”

Reports were accepted and new business was discussed, followed by a wonderful roast beef dinner supplied by the host group.

Johanne St. Louis, our guest speaker, talked about her work in Rwanda. After her children were born, she wanted to start working in her chosen field of design. A television program spoke of the need for new developments in Rwanda, so she called them and offered her services. Johanne began with a group who wanted to sew and so she took her patterns for pajamas to Rwanda to begin working with them. The pajamas are sold in Rwanda, on her website, and even in stores in the Lindsay/Peterborough area. Johanne flies to Rwanda once a year with new patterns and brings finished goods home to stock the shelves here.

The Rev. Dr. Lynda Reid installed our 2012 executive and we closed singing, Nothing is Impossible.

Phyllis Davis

The Annual Meeting of the **Lanark-Renfrew Presbyterial** took place on February 4 in Westminster Presbyterian Church. President Lottie Sutherland welcomed everyone and constituted the meeting with prayer. The theme was New Year—Renewed Vision.

The Smiths Falls ladies led the devotions from the letter of James on faith versus deeds. Then, our Regional Area Consultant, Christine Ball, led us in a mission study on the Cariboo. A map was used to show the area of the Cariboo ministry. We sat in a circle, as they would in a Cariboo home church, and participated in the Call to Worship, Instrumental Prayer of Adoration, and scripture reading from Ephesians 4:1–7, 11–15, and we heard stories of our partners, Devon and Greg. This was followed by thought-provoking questions and a closing prayer using a prayer stick.

In the afternoon, the Renfrew ladies led the Seasons of Prayer and Lottie Sutherland read Psalm 116:15–19 followed by the In Memoriam service. Reports were read and accepted as printed. Joan Hilliard installed the new officers. To close, Lois Patchell, the new Presbyterial President, gave the Benediction.

Brockville Presbyterial met on January 26 at Knox Presbyterian Church in Morrisburg for their annual meeting with the theme, Reach Out in Love. President Catherine Blatch opened the meeting with prayer.

The Winchester group led the worship using Luke 17:11–19 as a base for our approach to those who are rejected and for the dejected people in our society. We hope to encourage and befriend those who are homeless and the Indigenous people, who need to be heard. Catherine Blatch then encouraged us to discuss how to give and receive love based on Bible passages and some real life experiences.

After lunch, the Rev. Ken McLaren, Executive Director of Ottawa Inner City Ministries, spoke about the homeless people in Ottawa, many of when are coming from the Ottawa valley. Ottawa Inner City Ministries is an inter-denominational Christian ministry serving the poor and homeless in Ottawa. They offer food, shelter, and support, and build safe relationships with those in need.

They also have an Art Program, called Passion 4 Youth, which has been successful in developing self-esteem and talent in young people, and in cultivating a relationship with them. Some of the youth in the program have returned to school, or participated in work programs. Art shows are held twice a year.

Following this presentation, Mary Moorhead and Donna McIlveen led the Memoriam. We then presented Street Survival Kits and a monetary donation to the work of Ottawa Inner City Ministries.

In closing, Donna McIlveen installed the executive.

LOCAL

Knox Presbyterian Church, Tiverton ON, recently celebrated the 99th birthday of Irene Bradley. Irene stills attends most of their meetings!

Forward in Faith

Welcome Spring! Here in Toronto, our winter was mild, but I know that others across Canada have had quite a severe winter at times—so welcome Spring!!

In reality, as I write this it is still winter and we are finalizing the year-end figures for 2011. Thank you to all the groups and individuals who have made donations throughout the year.

For your interest, the donations received, to date, for the two Together We Can! projects are: $8,900 was sent in July 2011 to Action Refugies in Montreal and we still have a year-end balance of $9,537.10; and $31,377.88 has been given for the health clinics in Gaza. Thank you for being so generous.

Our incoming group donations were $504,686, somewhat less than last year's $522,571, but still strong. We are working to keep our expenses down, but the budget difference between revenue and expenses is getting wider. We make up the difference from donated undesignated funds, but of course, as you can imagine, this cannot go on forever.

Sometimes we are forced to make hard decision. We know there has been some disappointment indicated in the decision to eliminate the funding for shipping knitted goods to India and Malawi from our Council general budget. I'm sure you have seen the article a couple of months ago explaining the reasoning behind this decision. Please don't stop knitting, but do consider the cost of mailing these gifts overseas. The Council Executive decided that to continue spending $10,000, or more each year, on just the mailing costs did not make sense (and we've been doing this each year for about 10 years). We are not telling groups to stop knitting (for India), but simply asking each Group to bear their own cost of mailing if they wish to continue supporting India in this way.

Best wishes to all of you as you continue your mission work in countless ways.

Janet Brewer, Treasurer

Remembering

Helen Hanna
Willy van Leeuwen
Evelyn Nichol
Lois Sage
Northern WMS of the
Atwood Presbyterian
Church, Atwood ON

Scottie Church
Essa Road Presbyterian
Church, Barrie ON

Rev. Cathrine Campbell
Dini Nethery
Melville Presbyterian
Church WMS,
Brussels ON

Mary Stewert
Grace Presbyterian Church
WMS, Calgary AB

Betty Godfrey
St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Church, Carleton Place ON

Phyllis Mary Smith
Marce L. Wood WMS
Aux, St. Andrew's,
Cobourg ON

Margaret Williams
Burns Mosa, Glencoe ON

Hilda McKenzie
St. Andrews Church,
Guelph ON

Phyllis Bentley
St. Andrew's WMS,
Kingston ON

Hazel McCrea
New St. James,
London ON

Donna MacTavish
Burns Presbyterian Church,
Mosa Glencoe ON

Mrs. Anna Cunningham
West Park, Red Deer AB

Helen MacGregor
Bette MacLeod
Edith Simpson
Ashfield/Knox, Ripley ON

Jean Anderson
St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Women, Scarborough ON

Marion Burkholder
Bernice "Bee" Mathers
Ethel Sharpe
Jubilee, Stayner ON

Irene Wallace
Osgoode Presbyterian
Church, Vernon ON

Circulation News

Thank you to all the faithful readers of Glad Tidings, some of whom have been subscribers for many years. With your help, maybe we can increase the subscriptions by sharing the magazine with others. It may seem early, but this is a good time to begin your promotion of Glad Tidings for the Fall. Consider coming up with a list of 5-10 women in your congregation that do not currently receive a copy of the Glad Tidings. Give them your copy to read, or get a copy for each one from our office. Remember, we can supply you with up to 20 copies for promotional use within your congregation.

And, one final reminder, if you are moving, please notify the WMS office at least six weeks before. Then you will be certain to not delay a single issue! You can contact us by phone, mail, or email. If possible have a copy of your magazine available so you can give us your mailing information directly from the magazine.

Katherine Allen

Planting Seeds of Hope for Generations to Come

How Planned Gifts Are Growing the Church and Its Mission

Did you know that the Synod of Saskatchewan has its own oil well? The oil well was a planned gift made to the synod, and the royalty income generated by the well helps to fund camping programs such as the Canoe Camp held each July at Camp Christopher. Your synod doesn't have its own oil well? Not to worry. Your planned gifts could help establish an endowment fund — a kind of perpetual oil well — at any of the seventeen Presbyterian camps across Canada, to provide fun and life-changing experiences for children and young people year after year.

proVisionaries
Planting seeds of hope. For generations to come.

What will your legacy be . .

To learn more about how your planned gifts can make a lasting difference, call the Planned Giving Office at 1-800-619-7301 or visit presbyterian.ca/plannedgiving

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Glad Tidings

July/August 2012

Become Aware

Children in Poverty in Canada Mission Study

20 Children in Poverty in Canada—Mission Study
by Helen Smith

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Glad Tidings
July/August 2012
Volume 88, No. 4
EDITOR: Colleen Wood
DESIGN: Alexis McKeown
CIRCULATION: Katherine Allen

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Canada

Glad Tidings reports on aspects of the Women's Missionary Society on all levels. *Glad Tidings* challenges concerned Christians to reflect on their faith through articles and reports related to mission and social justice issues, locally, nationally, and internationally. *Glad Tidings* through its content, encourages readers to become informed, educated, inspired, and motivated to action. *GladTidings* provides a forum for a broad spectrum of opinion and information, thus the views expressed in features, news reports, letters, and book reviews are not necessarily endorsed by the WMS or by the Editor.

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We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.

Last night, I was planning to go to a city-wide prayer gathering at a local church to pray for the city of Brampton. As my family was eating dinner and I was about to dash out the door, my six-year-old son said, "I want to come." I tried to deter him. "There is no child care." "You would have to sit quietly the whole time." "I think you would be bored." But, nothing deterred him. So, I thought, "I have to let him come. My child is asking to come to church. How can I say no?"

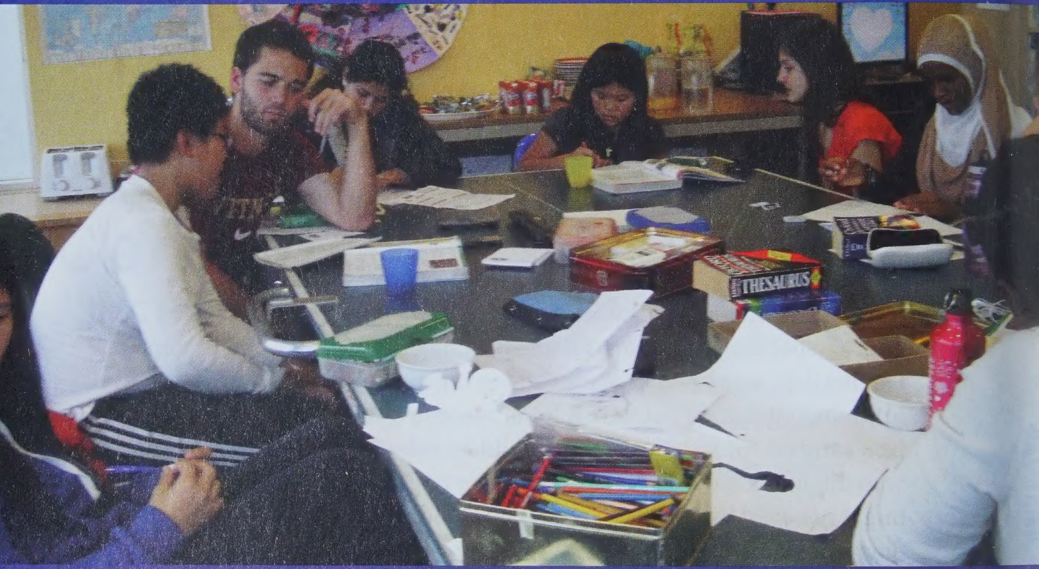
On the way, I explained to him that several of the churches in Brampton were gathering to prayer for Brampton. We were specifically praying for an upcoming day called, Love Brampton. On this day, many people were coming together to host events for those in Brampton that do not have a lot of money. One of the events would be a carnival for families. There would be rides and games for children, who might not have enough money to go to the zoo, or a play place. They might not even have enough money for food or clothing. Ian said, "I didn't know that there were kids in Brampton like that." So we continued to talk about children whose families might have to rely on school breakfast programs or local food banks to have enough food to eat. Most importantly, we talked about why we do this. We do this because God loves us, and God wants us to love others.

In the first of our four-session study on children in poverty, we are reminded that far too many children live in poverty in this country. We are reminded that we must share God's love with them. We are called to make a difference, and many of the articles in this month's *Glad Tidings* are stories about ministries that are making a difference.

This summer, spend time learning more about children in poverty in Canada. Learn more about organizations that are making a difference, and then seek out and support those organizations in your community. Also, pray. Pray for the ministries you will learn about in this edition of *Glad Tidings*. Pray for local ministries that are making a difference. Pray for all the children who live in poverty. Finally, pray for those children who don't live in poverty, but that care about those who do.

Poverty

by Joseph Taylor



"Oh, for the good old days when people would stop Christmas shopping when they ran out of money." (Author Unknown) This quotation is humorous, but also expresses a truth about our lifestyle today and if we reflect on it, yields some understanding about issues of poverty and social mores. Nostalgia for the good old days is often the product of a selective memory and very few of us would actually choose to trade our today and tomorrows for yesterday. However, it does seem that life in the not too distant past was simpler; communities were more supportive and there was less disparity in lifestyles between low and high income groups.

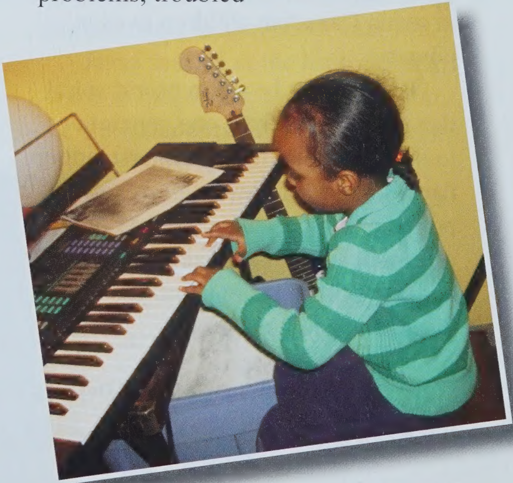
Society seemed to be more equitable then; life was far from perfect in those good old days albiet social ills existed. However, the essence of life was measured not just by material possessions, but also by the quality of our relationships. A description of life then, especially in small towns and rural areas might have been—community.

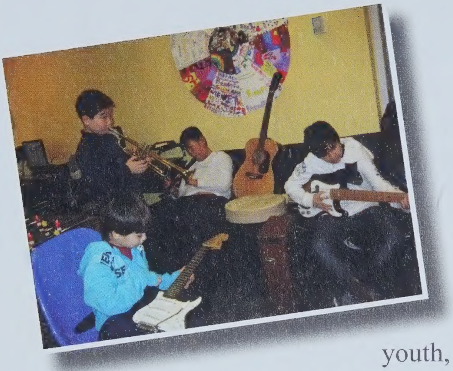
Fast forward to today; the standard of living for most people is higher, but life is more complicated, social isolation is common, and individuals and countries measure their well-being mostly through possessions and economic activity. In the words of Bill Clinton during the presidential campaign of 1992, "it's the economy, stupid." Today, the strength of our social connection and responsibility to our neighbour has weakened and a societal attitude of 'winner takes all' seems to dominate. A one-word description of life today in our modern society might be—individualism. The Occupy Wall Street movement might consist of mixed motives and purposes, but could be seen as an indication that we are moving towards a society of 'haves' and 'have-nots'.

It is undeniable that we have the right to reap the rewards of our labour, but it is also undeniable that as Christians we have a responsibility to share our abundance with those who have little. Our time, talents, and strength are all gifts from God and are meant to be shared. We need look no farther than the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man to understand what Jesus expects of us. In Luke 16, the rich man was judged not for what he did, but what he failed to do!

A modern version of this parable is lived out today in our neighbourhoods by people, who are chronically unemployed, or homeless, or suffer from mental illness, or addictions. These are people who represent Lazarus in our era. What is our response to them? Do we tell them that they need to get a job, stop drinking so much, or spend their money more wisely—and then will we help them? Poverty is a complex phenomenon and exists for many reasons; however, as a German proverb so aptly states: "Charity sees the need and not the cause." People come to Evangel Hall Mission for different reasons; some for food and shelter, others need a dignified, affordable apartment; some have an urgent need for health and dental care; and young people need mentoring, skill development, and opportunities to socialize.

It can be said that poverty is an equal opportunity exploiter. No one is truly immune from poverty; it afflicts people of all races, classes, ages, and backgrounds—and poverty wears many faces—the face of those who are unemployed, people with addictions and mental health problems, troubled





youth, those fleeing domestic violence and dysfunctional families, homelessness, and social isolation. However, poverty is particularly devastating for children and youth. Children who suffer from poverty, especially those enduring deprivation for long periods, have elevated levels of health problems, developmental delays, and behavioural disorders. They tend to attain lower levels of education and are more likely to live in poverty as adults. At 15.1 %, Canada's child poverty rate is higher than the average of industrial countries. More than one in seven Canadian children lives in poverty.

Poverty can be a downward spiral that gets passed from one generation to the next and with the understanding that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, Evangel Hall Mission offers social/recreational opportunities and life skills development for disadvantaged youth.

One of the programs Evangel Hall Mission offers for young people is Transit for Teens. We collaborate with downtown Toronto high schools to identify students, who have high rates of absenteeism and we support over 50 students with TTC tickets, academic counselling, social service referrals, and housing. This program is highly successful, with students in the program averaging one grade level higher than they did previously. Last year, there was a phenomenal success rate with the graduating students from the Transit for Teens program—100% of them were accepted into college or university programs! One of those students is a tenant at the Evangel Hall Residence. A long-time youth program participant and volunteer, he won Central Tech's Alumnae Award for Student Success when he graduated last June and was accepted into George Brown College in the Child and Youth Worker program. He loves his new college life, enjoys his classes, and is learning a lot through his placement at a local elementary school. Originally referred to Evangel Hall Residence from Sick Children's Hospital, he has overcome many health problems to achieve this level of success. Not only has he broken the cycle of poverty, but is well on his way to becoming a productive adult, who helps other young people escape the poverty trap!

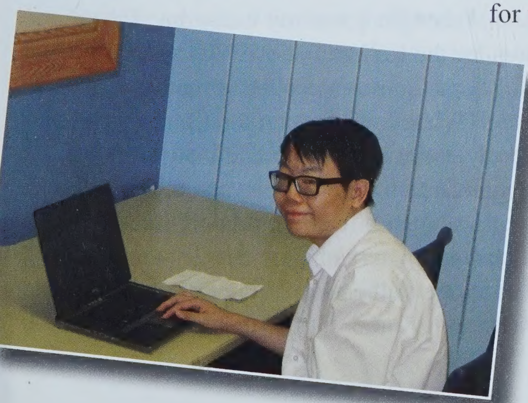
The deprivation of childhood poverty is a handicap that magnifies small differences into large impediments to success in later life!

This is a wonderful example of a charity performing a critical service, so that some children might have a better future than they otherwise would. But it also exhibits a sad truth; society has in many ways abandoned its covenant to protect vulnerable and at-risk youth and is leaving this up to the charitable sector. The distressing fact in a society where 'winner takes all' is that there will be many losers, who will not be able to command enough resources to properly care for themselves and their family.

In addition, we must weigh the costs of reducing income disparity and equalizing opportunity with the social costs that will be reaped later if we fail to act. There is a simple correlation between income disparity and opportunity for children in their formative years with inequalities of outcomes and success as these individuals transition to adulthood; any savings gained today through lack of action to reduce poverty will surely result in larger economic and social costs tomorrow. Are we willing to accept diminished and broken lives as the inevitable consequence of economic competition? It is ironic that we may speak with passion about the necessity to stop squandering our children's economic future, but do not consider the 'social deficit' we are creating and passing onto future generations.

There is a story about two frogs who wanted to determine who was the better jumper. They decided to race each other up a flight of stairs to see who could reach the top first. The stairs were twelve inches apart and the one frog could jump exactly that high. He quickly reached the top. The other frog could only jump eleven inches high and as hard as he tried he could not even make it to the first stair. He was a complete failure in his quest. The moral of this tale is that small differences in our abilities can make dramatic differences in our success in life. The deprivation of childhood poverty is a handicap that magnifies small differences into large impediments to success in later life!

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Let us take Jesus at his word and rededicate ourselves to giving all children a fair opportunity to develop the talent and abilities given to them by God.



Joseph Taylor serves as the Executive Director for Evangel Hall Mission.

Poverty Struck

by Nikki Spencer

I grew up in the small town of Kenora, Ontario, where there was always a negative connotation associated with the street people. I grew up listening to people refer to them as 'bums and drunks'. Because Kenora is surrounded by many different reserves there is a strong Aboriginal presence in our small, but dominant 'white' community. This leads to the stereotype many people in our town have, which is that the majority of the homeless, mainly Aboriginal, are simply 'bums and drunks'. Now I question myself and wonder why I didn't ask at the time: "Why are they homeless and who is helping them?"

I left Kenora when I was 18 years old to go to university and told myself that I was getting out and never coming back. I was expecting to move to Ottawa and gain what I thought was going to be my 'life changing experience'. I think about how naïve we can be when we're teenagers. We always believe that there is something more or something better out there, whatever that may be, when really it was on my front door step all along.

After my four years at university as a Communications and English student, and a small stint living abroad in Turkey, I returned to Kenora and realized that our small community was facing a large problem. It all began when I was searching for my first 'real' job using my university degree. There was an ad online on the Kenora LEAP website for a PR and Fundraising Intern. I thought it was my lucky day. I then noticed that it was for the Kenora Fellowship Centre.

I then had to ask the question, "What is the Kenora Fellowship Centre? What do they do at the Centre?" After living in Kenora my entire life, how could I not know what this local organization did in my own community? After hours of researching online, I could only find bits of information. I asked my parents, my friends, and my neighbours, and not one of them could honestly tell me, what goes on at the Centre.

As I waited in the Fellowship Centre for my interview, I looked around and noticed that I recognized a lot of the people. I watched these 'bums and drunks' joke and playfully interact with the staff and realized that this job was the 'life changing experience' I was looking for. Luckily, I did get the job. Now I can truly find out about the amazing work at this Centre and begin to change my life.

On my first day, I started by shadowing one of the volunteers in order to get a feel for the Centre and interact with the patrons. After speaking at length with the volunteer, I learned that he grew up in poor circumstances and had ended up turning to alcohol to deal with his problems. He had discovered the Fellowship Centre and used it as a place of refuge and began volunteering his time to help keep him sober. He told me that volunteering made him feel good about himself because he was helping people, who were just like him. I think it gave him a sense of pride because he understood what the other patrons were going through.

The Kenora Fellowship Centre performs many different functions. However, its most important feature is serving as a home and safe place of refuge for our patrons. Many of them feel that the staff at the Fellowship Centre is their family. We operate as a drop-in by day and a shelter by night. There is room to accommodate 21 people (overnight), with separate rooms for men and women. When our patrons stay at the shelter, they have supper and a shower on arrival, and are provided with pyjamas, blankets, and a mattress. Each person's clothing is kept in a separate bag and is laundered overnight. Prior to their morning departure, breakfast is provided. The drop-in receives up to 100 people daily. We also offer lunch three days a week in the Winter (the other four lunches are provided by local churches), and in the Summer we offer lunch six days a week.

The Fellowship Centre also offers the Step Up program, which encourages our patrons to share their thoughts and feelings. It is a healing program for people, who have suffered physical, mental, or emotional scars from Residential Schools. Funding for this program has come from the Healing and Reconciliation Fund of The Presbyterian Church of Canada. Meetings are held every two weeks, and have been quite well attended and are very beneficial. Nancy Morrison and Tommy Keesick are two local Elders who run the meetings, and we also feature guest speakers, who are usually individuals from the community.

There is also an arts and crafts therapy session once a week, which allows many of our patrons to return to their Aboriginal roots and express themselves in a creative way. Some of our patrons do not want to talk about their pain so this is a better alternative for them. This form of therapy also gives our patrons an activity to participate in to get them off the streets. The Centre is filled with art from the patrons and it gives them a sense of pride knowing that our staff appreciates their work.

Other activities and services that the Centre provides are: referrals for housing, jobs, and social assistance; meeting spiritual needs through chaplaincy, ecumenical services, and traditional Ojibwa customs (including Sharing Circles and drumming); performing marriages, and hosting funerals and wakes for those who regard the Centre as their home; giving people an address to receive mail; and helping them to obtain a health card, status card, or bank account.

Currently, the Kenora Fellowship Centre is in the process of taking over a program, which allows disadvantaged individuals to gain work experience in the community. We feel that the rehabilitation of those on the margins is crucial to our community development and that their integration into the community will help improve their image. This program gives people a sense of pride and self confidence. It also allows them to feel a sense of hope, in that they will gain valuable skills to prepare them for future employment.

Most of our clients have grown up in impoverished situations and haven't had the opportunity to make better lives for themselves. The cycle of poverty keeps continuing as many of these people have not had the guidance necessary to achieve more. Here at the Fellowship Centre, we are aiming to help end this continuous cycle and instill the idea that there are opportunities for the marginalized and disadvantaged.

I have been working at the Fellowship Centre for over two months and I have quickly learned how important my job and more importantly how meaningful the full-time operation of the Centre are. My job is to seek enough funding to sustain the shelter. In a community in which the average January temperature hovers at -17 degrees Celsius, cold is a serious danger for those without a safe shelter. If the shelter was not in operation, many would face frost bite and the possibility of death. Stuck in a cycle of poverty, many would continue in poverty. Dealing with past pains, many would lose hope. Many do really rely on the Centre.

Through working here, I've been able to answer my question of 'why', and I am now making a positive change to the community I grew up in. The Kenora Fellowship Centre is not only necessary for its patrons, but also for creating local awareness on the serious issue of homelessness. Through awareness, it is my hope that our community will stop stereotyping the homeless, and others will also start to ask 'why'.

Happy Anniversary PWS&D!

65 Years of Caring, Sharing and Service

For 65 years, our church has been actively working to support the world's most vulnerable and marginalized people through PWS&D's development and relief projects.

Thanks to your generous prayers and gifts, we've helped people like Wukji from Pakistan. When a severe food crisis hit Wukji's rural village, rising food prices and water shortages made it extremely difficult for him to feed his family, even despite pulling his son from school to save money.

"We have seen a change in our lives!"

Wukji received high quality, drought-resistant seeds and training on how to use organic fertilizer to grow more food as part of a PWS&D-supported program in his area. "Farmers in my village have increased their yields," he explains. "Prices are indeed rising but we are saving more money now."

Wukji's family now has enough food to eat. He purchased two goats to increase his income and happily enrolled his son back in school. Wukji and many other families in the community have significantly improved their ability to overcome food shortages and rising costs.

Thank you for your faithful support of PWS&D! Together we continue to build brighter futures of hope and opportunity for our brothers and sisters around the world.

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65 years

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Prepping a New Generation to Succeed

by Jen de Combe

On June 15, 2012, Tyndale–St. Georges Community Centre will be celebrating its 85th Anniversary—and what a celebration it will be! Founded in 1927 by industrialist Charles Johnson under the umbrella of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Tyndale–St. Georges has an incredible history of serving the neighbourhood of Little Burgundy in Montreal.

In 1927, Little Burgundy was an overcrowded industrial neighbourhood with a large underpaid workforce, and young families faced life with few avenues for fun and spiritual fulfillment. Tyndale–St. Georges' earliest programs were therefore designed to allow children to enjoy the simple pleasures of childhood, develop their Christian faith, and provide support to young mothers raising children with few resources. We accomplished this through summer camp, Christian education for young children, and child-rearing classes for young mothers. One of our first projects was the purchase of a playground so that the children would have a safe and fun place to gather in their neighbourhood. Inspired by the teaching and faith tradition of the Gospel, Tyndale–St. Georges has a rich and deep history of believing in the potential of authentic transformation in the lives of people in the here and now.

While we have seen many changes over our 85 years of service, there has also been strong continuity of mission. As well, while our programs have expanded to meet the needs of adults in the community, we still maintain a strong focus on youth. Over 150 children and teenagers come through our Centre each week, taking part in different programming streams:

Early Childhood Programming:
educational programs for children and their parents to help build a child's self esteem, independence, and literacy skills

Elementary School Programming:
an after-school program and summer camp

High School Programming:
a homework help program, nutrition classes, basketball, and a summer internship program.

Although our neighbourhood has evolved over the years, it still faces many challenges. It continues to be densely populated and contains Canada's largest concentration of social housing. Many of our residents are newly arrived immigrants or visible minorities, who struggle against racism, poverty, high drop-out rates, and a general lack of opportunities. Tyndale–St. Georges sees these struggles, and believes that with strong support and loving care, all our families have the potential to achieve their dreams. We, therefore, encourage children to build resilience, confidence, and develop an openness to recognize and seize opportunities.

Thankfully, this power of transformation is not limited only to our young participants; as an organization we constantly listen to the needs of our community and evolve to meet these needs. In order to help promote high school perseverance, Tyndale–St. Georges has developed a new Math and Science Program for grade 5 and 6 students. We have also begun an Early Literacy Program, which helps children ages 0-5 prepare for elementary school. Studies have shown that developing strong reading skills early on significantly contributes to academic success, and that difficulty with math is regularly cited as a significant factor leading to high school drop-out. These programs, therefore, provide the necessary foundation to prepare children to persevere in high school, knowing that success requires long-term intervention and support. These programs are only the beginning as we move closer to establishing a new High School Perseverance Department at the Centre. Once launched, this initiative will expand our current high school programming and add a revolutionary interactive technology stream.

There are many reasons to rejoice in the work that is happening at Tyndale–St. Georges. As the new director and a committed Christian, I feel very proud to be part of an organization that has the well-being of its participants at heart and responds with love to the needs of our community. Tyndale–St. Georges is a place where the lives of children are strengthened and possibilities for success are opened up; and all who are involved, from participants to staff, are transformed by being part of this amazing community.

Jen de Combe is the Executive Director at Tyndale-St.Georges. For more information on her work, and the work of the Centre, visit their website, www.tyndalestgeorges.com.

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[i] We were later joined by the Anglican Diocese of Montreal in the 70's. Incorporated separately in the 1990's, Tyndale–St. Georges still enjoys a close relationship with its founding partners.

[ii] Tyndale–St. Georges is also very proud to offer pre-employment training to adults in the community through its Little Burgundy Employment Centre. Please visit our website to learn more about the wonderful work we are doing with adults in our community.

Reaching out to … Neighbours

by Maureen Kelly

Our church is a beautiful big old stone church in downtown Brampton, Ontario. Imagine preparing to teach children in Sunday School about the Good Samaritan story. Jesus told this story in answer to the question, Who is my neighbour? Then imagine someone coming to the door of the church asking, "Do you have any food?" and our response being, "We cannot help." This was my experience and it left me feeling very uncomfortable.

And that is how our congregation's food bank got started. The Holy Spirit does guide us. As the number of people knocking on the church door asking for food—any food—increased, we made sure that we had some groceries on hand. Most of the support comes from our own congregation, but many churches and community people contribute as well. We believe that this is God's Food Bank because the means to do this has been provided over and over again throughout the years.

We are now 'open for business' every Wednesday afternoon. To make this happen, our Wednesday starts at the grocery store to shop because the food that is donated to us is not enough. Plus, the need for fresh fruit, vegetables, and protein is very real. There is also a lot of set-up. We transform our Sunday School rooms—filling them with groceries, used clothing, and household items for that one day each week. (Then, at the end of the afternoon, we once again convert the rooms to be available for other groups and ministries of the church.)

Our clients receive non-perishable items, fresh fruit and vegetables, bread, tea or coffee, a protein choice (eggs, wieners, or chicken legs), and toiletries. We have baby food, formula, and diapers to give to parents who have babies. Every week, each client receives about two bags of groceries. It is not much, but it helps. They also receive a lunch of soup, sandwiches, dessert, and a drink. We also show a short Christian video (from Rob Bell's Nooma Series), while people wait to obtain their groceries.

Each week, we serve an average of 150 adults. They bring preschool children with them weekly and school age children during holiday times. Our clients are men, women, and children of many different cultures, economic backgrounds, educational levels, and health challenges. Some are newly poor, and still have some work. Many are not well enough to work and have children to feed. People talk and share their stories as they wait their turn.

To make this ministry happen requires 25–30 volunteers every week. They work hard, but also enjoy their time at the food bank. They socialize with our clients and with each other. They listen to the people who come for help and then try to supply their needs. They show concern; they remember the stories they hear, and often are able to obtain things at a later date for the clients. Most of our volunteers are seniors, who know that helping others is what they really want to do. Some of them have experienced poverty and hardship as children due to illness or the death of a parent. One of our volunteers knows about anxiety and depression because she experienced it in her own family. Her mother's suicidal thoughts were relieved when aid came and people showed that they cared enough to help. Assistance came to them from a church. Often what we do gives people hope and the courage to continue.

We have a real mission with the children who come with their parents. We feed them and then have an opportunity to read to them, teach them manners, and help them learn to share and play together. There are seasonal crafts. Some of the children come with aggressive behaviour, yet they soon pick up skills of co-operation, learning, and using the language of 'please', 'thank you', 'may I', and 'okay, I will share the toys'. Parents also benefit as they learn skills to deal with their children. There is laughter and fun in the children's room. It is a safe place. Many of the children do not want to leave at the end of their time with us. Through our volunteers, God's love is shown in very practical ways to both young and old.

Since we started approximately 20 years ago, we have been able to follow how people are doing as their life progresses. Ramona recently came to thank us for the way we helped her and her family. She now has a job, her husband has come to belief in Christ, and they are active in a church near where they now live. None of this was true when she first came to us a few years ago.

Another lady is now going to school and working part-time. She stills needs help from us for basic groceries in order to get by, but she is moving forward in her life.

Another family currently has a little boy with leukemia, which means they have many trips to Sick Children's Hospital in Toronto. His mother comes for groceries, including things she can take with her to the hospital for lunch because she cannot afford to buy food there.

Tania came with her grandma when she was a little girl. She came back recently, very pregnant. She had big smiles as she spoke about her pleasant memories of playing the piano as she waited for her grandmother to select food for them at the food bank.

Unfortunately, we also have a high death rate among our clients since many are here because of ill health. Some recover from illness and injury and express gratitude that we were there for them when they needed us. For others, we have hopefully provided sustenance during their final days.

Our congregation's business does not end with the food bank. On Wednesdays, during the Fall and Winter months, we also have an Alpha Course, which includes a tasty dinner. People who come for dinner are meant to stay for the evening session. Yet, some are hungry for food and are not as aware that they are spiritually starving. Some come just for the meal, though we are also seeing many community folks deciding to stay. I love sharing and discussing faith with some of the food bank clients in these Alpha sessions. Painful stories of abuse are frequent. There are also vibrant declarations of belief that God has been so good in spite of everything. The power of the Holy Spirit is evident in people, who would have no hope if not for their faith in Christ. Some of our food bank clients also come to join our Sunday worship.

All in all, Wednesday has a special place at our church.

WMS Council President's Itinerary

June 21–24: Truth & Reconciliation Commission, Saskatoon
July 16–22: PCUSA Presbyterian Women's Conference, Orlando
September 2–14: 90th Anniversary of Women's Committee, Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, Taiwan

MANITOBA MISSION TRIP 2011

by Jessica Stol

As we headed out on a drizzly July morning—at an hour that most of us didn't want to be awake—we were unaware that the bus packed with our luggage would soon become our home for the next two weeks. This was the Presbytery of London Youth Mission Trip's first day on the road.

Most of us didn't know each other. We came from different churches and from different ends of the presbytery. One participant even came from another presbytery. Each of us held our own unique experiences and talents, as well as our own expectations and hopes for what we would get out of this trip. But as sleepy teenagers often do, we didn't share any of these personal details with one another at first. Instead, on that first day, most of us seated ourselves according to our familiar youth groups and the churches that we came from as we headed out for our long drive to Manitoba.

During the three full days of driving that followed, however, things began to change. The sturdy vehicle which had steered us through small towns and along prairie highways became a bit of a home away from home. By day three, items were strewn across our seats—blankets and pillows for long naps, card decks to pass the time, favourite books, journals, cameras, and other knickknacks or belongings. Slowly, as our possessions and interests started to make their way out into the open, so did our individual stories. We began to overcome the fear of the unknown territory that was ahead of us.

Arriving on a Sunday afternoon, we immediately were greeted by the poverty that littered inner-city Winnipeg. Suddenly, our bus seemed too big, bright, and new as it stood out amongst the surrounding houses and the mission centre. We didn't have long to dwell on this,

ESUS
YOU
ESUS
YOU

however, because within minutes, we were setting up a carnival for the neighbourhood kids—face painting, crafts, summer games, and a bouncy castle, which eventually drew a crowd of people. The afternoon had begun.

The following three days involved running two Vacation Bible Camps at Winnipeg Inner City Mission (WICM) and Flora House in the morning, feeding lunch to the kids, and then taking them on field trips in the afternoon—these included visiting the zoo and two conservation areas. Soon songs were a staple of the program and we had formed bonds with one another and with the Winnipeg Inner City Mission children and staff.

Some of us had kids that were tied to our hip for those days. I had a nine-year-old boy as my buddy and two girls in our group worked one on one with an eleven-year-old girl, who had recently been traumatized by her father beating her mother. The younger children shared their stories and experiences with us, eventually prying our stories out too as we connected with them in this short time.

As always, saying goodbye was the most difficult part and hugs abounded as we departed from the children we had come to know so well—those children who sometimes reminded us of younger versions of ourselves or of siblings back home. The hardest part was hearing their excited voices ask if we would be back next year.

Since we had contributed to the Anishinaabe community through our work at the two missions, they in turn, reciprocated. We travelled to the Keeseekoowenin Native Reserve, which was a couple hours' drive north of Winnipeg—nearly getting stuck and lost without phone service, but that's another story. That afternoon was spent picking medicine in the fields, swimming in the pristine Clear Lake, learning about First Nations traditions and culture, and hearing the first-hand experiences about the residential schools from elders, before we had the opportunity to sleep in tepees. We were blessed by their generosity.

The bus ride back home was different. Everything that we had seen

in Winnipeg—from the spray-painted school that the WICM children attended to the mission centres that provided them with an opportunity for hope—had changed a part of us.

When we had climbed on that bus at the start of our journey, we didn't know how the week was going to go. There were new things that we had to learn along the way as we led the Vacation Bible Camp stations and groups, interacted with various personalities, and discovered our own strengths and weaknesses. In our mismatched family that evolved on the bus, we found that we were a talented bunch—some could make balloon animals, others could always be counted on to have hot tea with them, some were great listeners, some could sing, some could braid hair, some were great at fixing things (even a fellow youth's braces!).

I think that during the Presbytery of London Youth Mission Trip to Manitoba, we learned more than we gave. The Anishinaabe community taught us other ways in which to view and appreciate the world, both through the streets of Winnipeg and through their culture on the reserve. The WICM children taught us lessons of patience, understanding, acceptance, forgiveness, imagination, and thankfulness; these will likely last longer than many of the things we've been taught in high school.

The Presbytery of London Youth Mission Trip was a week of working together and finding our niches. It was a week filled with getting to understand people better, people that we wouldn't have necessarily had the chance to meet otherwise. It was a week of hope and promise. When we got off the bus 10 days after leaving, we knew that those 10 days were days that will continue to make a lasting difference in our life.

Jessica attends Westmount Presbyterian Church in London, Ontario. If you ever need to find her, follow the sound of a kettle's whistle—she'll be nestled with a mug of tea and furiously writing stories about the make-believe people in her head, as well as the adventures she hears from real-life people who are always more interesting.

Children in Poverty in Canada

Becoming Aware of the Canadian Situation

by Rev. Helen Smith

Mission Study

This is the first of four mission studies looking at Children in Poverty in Canada. The following sessions are planned:

- **Food Security** in the September–October 2012 edition
- **Housing** in the January–February 2013 edition
- **Education** in the May–June 2013 edition

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, we pray for the gift of your Spirit during this study of Children in Poverty in Canada. Open up our minds to see the reality. Open up our will to act with integrity and solidarity with those about whom we will learn. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

Hymn: Praise to the Lord, Book of Praise, # 71

Biblical Witness

In biblical times, widows and orphans were considered the poorest and most vulnerable of society. Without a husband, women had no status, no income and thus, no security and no power. Orphans were children whose fathers had died. The absence of a father meant that the orphan, like the widow, had no security. The biblical phrase "widows and orphans" could be replaced today with "children or families in poverty."

Have assigned members of your group read aloud the following passages. Discuss briefly the question following the readings.

Psalm 10: 12–14
Psalm 68: 5
Psalm 146: 5–9

How does God relate to widows and orphans?

Matthew 18: 1–3
Matthew 18: 6
Matthew 19: 13–15

What is Jesus' attitude to children?

Isaiah 1: 17
Jeremiah 7: 3–7
James 1: 27

How does God call us to relate to widows and orphans?

Quick Facts

- 1 in 10 children live in poverty in Canada.
- 40% of those relying on food banks are children.

from Makepovertyhistory.ca

Scripture connects our attitudes and actions in response to poverty and to our knowledge of God, as if these are the two sides of the same coin. To show mercy is to know God. If you have time, consider reading the following passages: Proverbs 29:7; Jeremiah 22: 13–16, 22:37–39; and Matthew 25:40

As we move through these studies on Children in Poverty in Canada, may our prayer be that we will come to know God and our neighbour better through prayer, study, and action.

Leadership Notes:

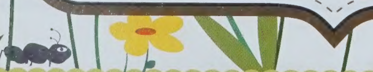
If possible, have a copy of the study for all in attendance. There is a lot of information in this study, and allowing participants to bring a copy of the study home will allow them to review the information on their own.

You can use this content for two meetings—spend one meeting looking at the Biblical content, and the next studying the mission content.

This is how some Grade 4 and 5 children in North Bay measure poverty

Poverty is ...

wishing you could go to McDonald's
getting a basket from the Santa Fund
feeling ashamed when my dad can't get a job
not buying books at the book fair
not getting to go to birthday parties
hearing my mom and dad fight over money
not ever getting a pet because it costs too much
wishing you had a nice house
not being able to go camping
not getting a hot dog on hot dog day
not getting pizza on pizza day
not going to Canada's Wonderland
not being able to have your friends sleep over
pretending that you forgot your lunch
being afraid to tell your mom that you need gym shoes
not having breakfast sometimes
not being able to play hockey
sometimes really hard because my mom gets scared and she cries
hiding your feet so the teacher won't get cross when you don't have boots
not being able to go to cubs or play soccer
not being able to take swimming lessons
not being able to take the electives at school (downhill skiing)
not being able to afford a holiday
not having pretty barrettes for your hair
not having your own private backyard
being teased for the way you are dressed
not getting to go on school trips.[iii]



Children in Povert in Canada

In 1989, about 12% of children in Canada were living in poverty. That was the year the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion to eliminate child poverty in Canada by 2000. Some 22 years later, and going past the year 2000, child poverty has been reduced by just 20%. One in 10 children in Canada lives in poverty. For aboriginal children, it is one in four.[i] Children in poverty means families are in poverty.

Discussion Questions

The above are important markers, but how do you measure poverty?

What line struck you the most in the poem, *Poverty is ...*?

Canada does not have a standard measure of poverty. Statistics Canada often uses the Low Income Cut Off (LICO). To measure the LICO, we start by using the 1992 consumption pattern that an average family spent 43% of their income on food, shelter, and clothing. If a family of the same size spends this percentage plus 20% of their income on these basic needs, they would be at the LICO. For example, say an average family of four spends 43% of their income on food, shelter, and clothing. If a family of four spends more than 63% of their income on the basics, they would fall below the LICO. In 2009, the LICO for a family of four in a medium-sized city was $29,455.[ii] There are also measures called market basket (income needed to meet basic needs), and low income measure (50% of the median income in Canada).

Surprisingly, not all households below the poverty line are receiving social assistance. One in three low income children has at least one parent working full time.[iv] Of those who are receiving social assistance, a study by Professor Michael Ornstein of York University, commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, points out that 95% of the employable people on welfare were involved with part-time work, school, job training, volunteer work, or job searching. Some ask: Do single women just have babies to get on welfare and keep having them to stay there? Over 75% of single parents on assistance are divorced, separated, or widowed: 40% have only one child, but that child still needs to be cared for. Lack of affordable childcare is one of the great barriers to employment for single parents.[v] Government programs, such as the GST credit, Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB), and Canada Child Tax Credit all help, but they are not enough.

Every child needs a champion.

-Hillary Rodham Clinton

Quick Facts

- 1 in 4 children in First Nations communities grow up in poverty.
- 1 in 3 low income children has a parent who works full time throughout the year.
- Children of recent immigrants, of Aboriginal identity, in racialized families, in female lone-parent families, and those with a disability are at a higher risk of being in poverty.
- Household debt reached a new high of $1.41 trillion in December 2009. If divided among all Canadians, each individual would have carried $41,740 in outstanding debt in 2009.
- There were 881,100 people working part time in October 2010 because they couldn't find full time employment, up from 682,900 two years ago in October 2008.
- Low income children are more likely to have low birth weights, asthma, type 2 diabetes, and suffer from malnutrition.

from Campaign2000.ca

Group One:

You work full time at a job that pays $11.00 an hour. Let's round of and say your take hom pay is $400 a week or $1,600.00 a month (which according to Statistics Canada is rig at the 2009 LICO for a family this size living i a medium sized city[vii]). The maximum you can get for the Canada Child Tax Credit is $300 a month[viii] and the UCCB is $100/month. That would bring your total disposable income to $2000 each month. Work out the budget for your month—don't forget utilities, child car while you are at work, and transportation to get there and back.

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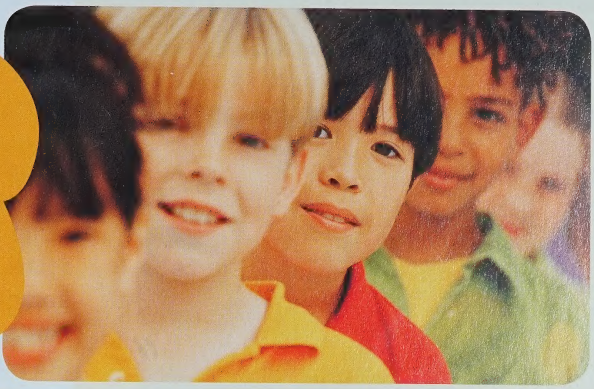
Jesus loves the little children.



Exercise

Divide your group into three. Have each group work out a monthly budget, using the following scenarios. In each case you are a single parent with one pre-school child. You may want to provide some grocery flyers and information on rental units in your area.

You may want to contact your local provincial social services office and use the figures for your area.

Group Two:

In Alberta, if the same parent is unemployed, but looking for work, they will have $889 from Alberta Works, plus the Child Tax Credit and UCCB for a total of $1,289 a month. Work out a budget for your month—when looking for work, don't forget transportation when you apply and are being interviewed, and child care while you look.

l incomes may skip eir children to have uate diet.[vi]

Group Three:

If, for the short term, you are unable to work because of health problems, in Alberta you will have a total from Alberta Works of $1,406. Again, the maximum you can get for the Canada Child Tax Credit is $300 a month[viiii] and the UCCB is $100/month. That would bring your total disposable income to $1,806 each month. Work out a budget for your month.

Children in Poverty in Rural Areas

It is difficult to find statistics on rural poverty, but the few studies done tend to show a lower incidence of poverty in rural areas as opposed to urban. However, rural poverty has its own issues, most of which affect the children in poverty there.

Access to educational opportunities, recreational centres, organized activities, child care, health facilities, social services, food banks, and libraries can be limited. With no or limited public transit, transportation is a problem. In many rural or semi-rural locations, employment and education opportunities are limited. Many jobs are minimum wage jobs, service positions, perhaps feeding into the tourism trade and, therefore, could also be seasonal. Child care with extended hours, which is often what is needed for seasonal work (e.g., the tourism season or sowing and harvesting seasons), is difficult to find. With wages low, and few jobs available for teenagers, post-secondary education for many children is beyond their reach. Some areas are one industry areas, which can lead to problems if the industry

Aboriginal Children in Poverty

We have seen the pictures on our television screens of the living conditions at Attawapiskat. Poverty is a critical issue for First Nations communities and urban Aboriginal families.

The Rev. Dr. Margaret Mullin is Executive Director of Winnipeg Inner City Mission, a community committed to serving Aboriginal individuals and families in the inner city, and a part of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. She has provided this window into the life of one child living in poverty:

Hope is twelve. She attends Winnipeg Inner City Mission—Anishinabe Presbyterian Church and Sunday is no longer able to provide work (e.g., the collapse of the cod fishery in Newfoundland). Rental housing is almost non-existent and much of the low income housing is in poor repair and heating costs are high. All of these factors cause families to migrate to the cities, leading to the closing of more rural health centres, libraries, churches, and schools, and the further decline of services, support programs and, socialization.

Historically, informal systems, a strong communal tie, and a sense of solidarity (think of the old fashioned "barn raising") provided support for rural families. Today, with economic (the corporate farm) and demographic (migration to the city) changes, we are seeing the erosion of many community support systems in rural areas, including the closing of churches.

Discussion Questions

Has your presbytery closed any rural churches? If so, what opportunities for worship, pastoral care, youth or children's programs could your group or the presbytery provide for these areas?

How can we support children and families in poverty in rural areas? Discuss this in small groups.

For children in First Nations communities, immunization rates are 20% lower than the average for all children. One result is increased rates of hospitalization. In the first year, First Nations children are hospitalized 50 times more often with streptococcal pneumonia and 80 times more frequently with chicken pox than non-Aboriginal children.

From: UNICEF Canada. (2009). Canadian Supplement to THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN 2009. Aboriginal Children's health: Leaving no child behind.

Cultivate a child's life and watch them grow.

School on most Sunday afternoons. The worshipping community gathers at Anishinabe Place of Hope—Endaayaang. Hope is growing up in incredibly difficult circumstances. Her Mom, sober most times, still reverts to drinking too much when the stress of life gets too much for her. The family survives on Social Assistance so there is never enough. Hope and her two younger brothers and baby sister have been placed in the care of Child and Family Services for short periods of time, while Mom (Blossom) is surrounded with the support she needs to help her to stay sober and to keep her family together.

Blossom does not know how to parent. Blossom's mother, growing up in the residential school system, never learned how to parent. Blossom describes her mother as mean. Each time Blossom loses her kids she is devastated, but she has not found a method to deal with her stress except the infrequent binging. She always gets someone to mind the kids when she is drinking.

Hope asks us to pray for them all when prayer requests are being gathered before church. She always looks out for her younger siblings. Hope, this year, also had to look out for her cousin Faith. Faith watched her father beat her mother (Blossom's sister) severely and then leave her bleeding on the floor as he sped away on Faith's bike. Faith spent three months in a trauma-induced haze. The only person she felt safe with was Hope. Hope is my hero.

Discussion Questions

How does this story illustrate the systemic nature of poverty?

Why do you think Hope is Margaret's hero?

Light a candle and spend time in prayer for Hope and her family.

Finish your study with this Franciscan Blessing:

May God bless us with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships so that we may live deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people so that we may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless us with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, marginalization, and isolation, so that we may reach out our hand to comfort them and help turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless us with enough foolishness to believe that we can make a difference in this world so that we can do what others claim cannot be done.

Amen

Leadership Notes:

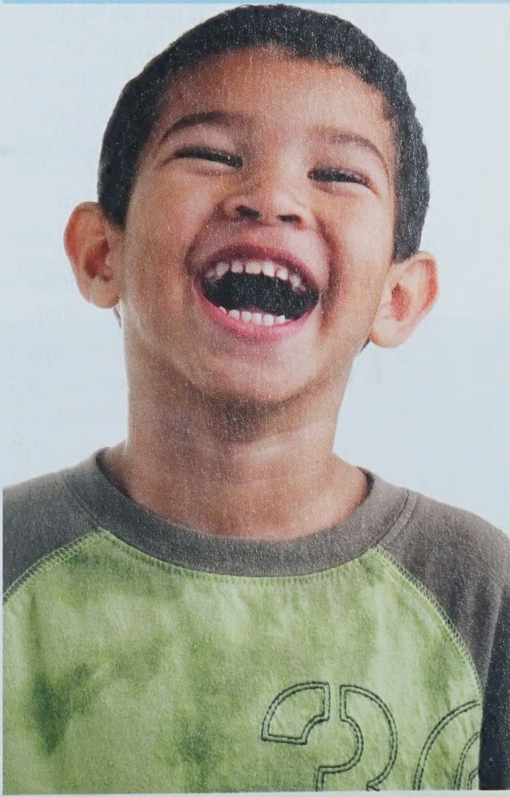
You might not choose to read all the information on poverty. Consider other ways you can relay some of this information—perhaps using posters, a PowerPoint presentation, or even a true and false quiz.

If you have a shorter study time, consider using the following:

- Begin with the Opening Prayer and hymn. (5 minutes)
- Biblical Study—choose one scripture passage from each section. (10 minutes)
- Children in Poverty in Canada—give some general information on markers of poverty, followed by Poverty is .... Then discuss in small groups, what you think poverty is. (10 minutes)
- Finish with the Franciscan Blessing. (2 minutes)

> Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him.
>
> Psalm 127:3 (NIV)

TAKE
CARE
OF THE
CHILDREN



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[i] "Revisiting Family Security in Insecure Times—2011 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada" Campaign 2000, 2011, p.2.

[ii] Low Income Cut-Offs Table, Statistics Canada, 2011.

[iii] "Our Neighbours' Voices: Will We Listen?" The Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, Toronto: James Lorimer, 1998, p. 107. Reprinted with permission.

[iv] "Revisiting Family Security ... " op.cit. p.6.

[v] "Reality Cheque: Telling Our Stories of Life on Welfare in Ontario," Cheryl Hamilton, ed., Toronto: The Ontario Social Safety NetWork, 2000.

[vi] "Oh Canada! Too Many Children in Poverty for Too Long." L. Rothman, Paediatrics & Child Health, October 2007.

[vii] Low Income Cut-Offs Table, Statistics Canada, 2011.

[viii] "Revisiting Family Security ... " op.cit. p.6.

[viiii] "Revisiting Family Security ... " op.cit. p.6.

Be Transformed

by Colleen Wood

The WMS Council met on May 4–6 at Crieff Hills with a theme of, Be Transformed. We arrived, some of us a day early for Council Executive meetings, with a spirit of openness and transformation.

Those of us on the Executive, were energized by the words of our President, Joan Smith. Joan reminded us of our strengths as a society—first and foremost of our faith in God, but also in prayer, education, interest in social justice, commitment to telling the Good News, strong leadership, generous givers, and caring fellowship. Though she also reminded us of some of the challenges—an outdated image, a misunderstanding of what the WMS does, and a new generation of women who have a different lifestyle and different ways of approaching mission. The Women's Gathering showed us the need for women's groups and Joan suggested that we can be the ones, 'to put this show on the road'. This is our time to transform, and remember, God has a plan for us! She also reminded us that three groups had to die to form our current WMS.

Betty Siverns, our Vice President, then presented the finding of the task force that was looking at the Society and considering its transformation. First, she shared that many WMS groups are struggling. Their members are getting older, there is too much administration, and it is harder to fill officer's positions (though one group mentioned that with mentoring it is getting better).

Groups suggested many possible changes, including more mission and less administration, more hands-on mission, recruiting granddaughters (maybe miss the generation in between), more technology, and livelier meetings. Most felt that we need to do something! After much discussion, a task force has been established to develop a vision/purpose, program, and structure, for an organization that would address the interests and concerns of all the women of the church. They will report back to the WMS Council Executive in early 2013.

WMS Council would continue to consider transformation through their three days of meetings. The Personnel Committee reported on two changes. First, Katherine Allen will be taking an early retirement after 45 years with the WMS. Secondly, Alana Martin, currently Resource Consultant with The Book Room, will begin work as the new WMS Administrative Assistant.

The Program Committee reminded us to continue to use the Cariboo Mission study and Stories of Mission to transform our minds and spirits. In addition, the Editorial Committee and Program Committee are excited to have worked together to produce a new WMS mission study with the first study appearing in this month's *Glad Tidings* (p. 20).

The Financial Report does show a steady decline in givings, yet the generosity of the WMS continues to astound me. We provided grants for several mission trips and the WMS is proving a grant of $25,000 to support a room at The Pines, the new retreat house at Crieff Hills, which will provide a space for guests looking for a quiet place to restore their spirits. As well, WMS groups (and congregations) have once again contributed generously to the two Together We Can! projects. We raised over $30,000 for the Gaza health clinics, and $20,000 for Action Réfugiés Montréal.

In Joan Smith's report to Council, she said the highlight of her 2nd year as president was the Women's Gathering.

It was a fantastic experience of joyous transformation. She announced that a committee has been formed and is busy planning for the 2nd national gathering to be held on Victoria Day weekend 2014. She reminded us that now is the time to start saving. If you put aside $5 a week, then you will have enough money to attend. As well, in 2014, the WMS will celebrate its 100th anniversary. This celebration will be held just prior to the gathering, on May 15.

The Rev. Dr. Lynda Reid helped to transform our spirits at Council as we explored Proverbs 3:5–6. We had great discussions as we explored various translations, and considered trust, and transformation.

In our final business, we chose two new Together We Can! projects. Internationally, we will support the Malawi Maternal Health program, and

Transforming Minds

As always, the WMS Council is blessed to have wonderful speakers. This year was no exception.

The Rev. Karen Horst gave an inspiring talk on change. She began by having us consider the changes in telephones. Even the younger ones among us have seen some change in phones, from dial phones to touch tone phones, large cell phones to smart phones. Karen reminded us that we did not die from this change! We adjust to change all the time—we just always don't realize we are doing it.

Karen's hope is that we quit worrying so much about survival and get on with our mission. If we are so loyal to how we have been, we are going to lose a new group of people—a group that cares about getting out and making a difference. The younger generation want a hopeful mission and they want to run with it. We need to invite them to join us.

Barb Summers, Communications Coordinator of PWS&D, educated us on their amazing relief and development work. She also got us very excited about the new Maternal Health Program in Malawi. Only half of the women in Malawi give birth in a health facility or with a trained birth attendant. Maternal death rates are high, as are the number of children who die at birth. This new program will work to improve antenatal care, decrease death rates, provide skilled attendants and immunizations, and get the men involved in maternal health.

The Rev. Dr. Rick Horst, Moderator of the 137th General Assembly, showed us amazing pictures from his tour to Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine. He mentioned that an international trip had been planned for him to an alternate location, but the General Assembly made a specific request that the moderator visit the within Canada, the Saskatoon Inner City Mission and the Cariboo ministry equally.

Two final notes of celebration … first, the offering at our Council meeting raised $1700 for the Flemingdon Gateway Mission, which reaches out to children in the Flemingdon region of Toronto. Secondly, we celebrated the ministries of both Katherine Allen and Lynda Reid and their upcoming transformation into retirement!

Holy Land instead. Rick said it is hard to come away from a trip to this area without being radically changed.

In his travels across Canada, he saw renewal and rejuvenation. Risks are being taken as we use our gifts to reach out. He saw encouraging signs of success. He also encouraged the WMS to be courageous risk takers, and reminded us that the WMS still leads the way in being a mission-minded community. We are created for mission—not to live as an institution!

The Rev. Rodger Hunter of Boarding Homes Ministry encouraged us to think differently about those who he ministers with. His ministry nurtures Christian community in a strange setting—boarding homes. Generally, these are privately-owned homes, and the residents tend to be people who had previously been in psychiatric care. Yet, these residents are a gifted people—they are beautiful and courageous people. A boarding home might be the last place you want to visit, but the reality is that groups, who start visiting, continue to do so! The volunteers find that they help to alter lives, but also that the residents alter the lives of the volunteers. They find that Jesus already lives in these houses and they meet him there, and they find that many of these residents are better Christians than we will ever be.

The Rev. Dr. Rick Fee updated us on the work of the Life and Mission Agency. Rick also preached on Sunday morning and focusing on Romans 12:1–12, gave an inspiring message of change. Rick spoke about the rapid changes in our world. He reminded us that the coming of Jesus was all about change. "Jesus was not sent to keep things the way they were. God expected and sent Jesus to bring about **change**—transformation." He encouraged us that our world can be transformed, if we are transformed. When the world around us is changing, we must rest our actions, and reactions, on the strong guidance of God.

Anna and David Pandy-Szekeres spoke to us about their work in Eastern Europe, specifically on the Roma People. The Roma people came from the India/Pakistan region of the world, likely a class even below the untouchable class. In the 1600s, they began to leave that region and came westward to Europe. They were generally a nomadic people, and lived in clans or tribes that would have a specific skill or trade. They would move to the edge of town and sell their wares until they no longer had customers and then they would move along. They never settled in any one place because they had no money and their heritage was nomadic.

It was easy for them to live this way under the feudal system, but under the communist system they were forcibly settled and given jobs. (Under communist rule, you can't be fired so often the Roma people did not choose to work in the job they were given.) In 1991, communism collapsed, and the Roma people found themselves out of work. A welfare system was instituted, but with a poor economy, a diminishing Hungarian population and an increasing Roma population, Hungary could not afford this system. David's work concentrates on two aspects when working with the Roma people—education and social needs (lavatories, wells, etc.).

Michelle Kim, who is working as an intern with the WMS while working on her postgraduate certificate in International Development at Humber College, spoke to us about human trafficking. She reminded us of the current situation and that Canada is active in both receiving victims of human trafficking, and as the country where victims of human trafficking move through to their final destination. There are also cases of Canada being a source country for victims.

Updates from Taiwain

Paul and Mary Beth McLean

January 2012

Sin-ngien Khoai-lok … Happy New Year! The Hakka Bible is now at the printers! We expect that it will be ready for distribution in April 2012. It is nearly 2400 pages long, since it contains the complete Old and New Testament printed in parallel columns using Hakka-Han characters and a Romanized phonetic script. We pray that the printing will be done accurately and in a timely fashion.

Trip to Taiwan, April 2012

(Written from Mary Beth's perspective)

On Thursday, April 5, Paul and I went to the Toronto Pearson Airport to board the EVA flight to Taipei shortly after midnight. On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, we awoke around 3:00 a.m. wide-eyed and bushy-tailed. It was Easter morning. Hallelujah! Christ is risen! Later that morning, we joined in a joyful Easter Sunday worship service at Chung-lak Presbyterian Church with a packed congregation of about 350. Paul read Luke 24:36–49, from the new Hakka Bible, and preached on the proof and power of the resurrection. He encouraged the congregation to share the Good News with others, especially with Hakka speaking people now that the Hakka Bible is available. The congregation of Taiwanese, Mandarin, Indigenous, and Hakka speakers seemed responsive.

On Tuesday, we travelled by train to Changhua for the PCT

The Yap sisters, retired Hakka ministers, have been working hard to proofread the Hakka Bible translation.

(Presbyterian Church in Taiwan) General Assembly at Changhua Christian Hospital (CCH). It is a high-tech Assembly held in a very comfortable auditorium with Power Point and translation into English and Japanese, but it's the first time we've ever eaten dinner in an underground parking garage! One floor of the garage had been turned into a banquet hall with round tables and chairs covered with pink and burgundy tablecloths and chair covers, and with beautiful flower arrangements flanking the head table. The Rev. Rick Fee, General Secretary of the Life & Mission Agency of the PCC, was also here. This was his first trip to Taiwan, and we thought that it was wonderful that he was here to celebrate the dedication of the Hakka Bible.

The PCT's theme for the coming year is *The Year of Hakka Mission*. On Thursday afternoon, there was a Hakka cultural event at which three of our friends gave information about Hakka culture and how to share the gospel with Hakka people. There was a Hakka choir, which sang a number of Hakka songs, and Paul sang a Hakka mountain song much to the delight of the audience. Also, on behalf of our son Peter (who raised nearly $30,000 for the Hakka Bible when he cycled across Canada), I was presented with a leather-bound Hakka Bible with his name on it. Wish he could have been here to receive it in person.

On April 13–16, we were in Miao-li, Kung Kuan. We actually stayed in Fuk-ki (pronounced 'Fook-gee') with the Gongs, a committed Christian family whom we met 30 years ago. Elder Gong, now 92 years old, was part of the Hakka Bible translation team. Each morning at 7:00 a.m., we joined him and his family for morning devotions where we read the new Hakka Bible together—what a joyful experience! It was wonderful to visit with the Gongs and so many of the people we knew when we lived there. On Friday evening, we went to Thung-Lo to have dinner with one of the elders. In the years we knew her, Elder Vong's mother-in-law tried to prevent her from attending worship services on Sunday mornings, but she persevered. She told us that her three sons, who are young men now, are all Christians and one of them is a missionary in Southeast Asia.

Churches in the area are growing and, being Hakka congregations, are very grateful to God and excited to have the Hakka Bible in their hands. That evening, we shared in fellowship with a Lutheran Brethren Hakka church plant of about 10 people, most of whom are new Christians. On Sunday morning it was great to see more old friends at the worship service in Kung Kuan Presbyterian Church, where Paul preached. A group of neighbourhood kids, mostly from non-Christian families, but who have been participating in the Saturday afternoon children's program, hung around after the service and thought it was pretty cool to speak Hakka to two foreigners. They ended up asking for our autographs! They were playing basketball, so Paul talked to them about the Taiwanese-American basketball player Jeremy Lin, who is a Christian. They all know who he is. Later, our host family showed us Lin's testimony (a booklet in the shape of a basketball) that the church has been distributing to young people.

On Sunday afternoon, we visited our old neighbourhood where we met former neighbours who still remembered the Mai (Wheat) family after 25 years. They remember Syau Mai "Little Wheat" (Andrew) and Syau-syau Mai "Littler Wheat" (Peter) speaking Hakka and playing with the neighbourhood kids. It's amazing how the area has prospered and how the population has grown. We used to be able to see rice paddies and mountains from our house, but now there are houses and schools blocking the view.

We then moved to Taipei. On Tuesday, Paul spoke at the morning worship service for the PCT's General Assembly office staff. Then we visited with the General Secretary, Rev. Andrew Chang, who told us about some of the church's programs. One program launched in 2010 is called "One leads One," which has challenged every member of the church to lead at least one person to Christ before 2015, which is the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Gospel in Taiwan. They have training programs in evangelism to equip the members.

On Tuesday afternoon, we visited the office of the Bible Society in

Mary Beth McLean with Susan Dzen

Overseas Staff Birthdays

August

9 – Paul McLean, Taiwan

Taiwan (BST), where we enjoyed much laughter and celebration with the General Secretary, the Rev. Andrew Tsai, Ms. Hsu Su-chen, who worked closely with Paul and the Hakka team to typeset the Bible last Fall, and the rest of the office staff. One gets the sense that they are a close-knit family of dedicated Christian workers, who long to see God's word translated and made available in all the languages spoken in Taiwan. We also had a good discussion about Paul's future work in promoting the Hakka Bible, contributing to the BST's Mandarin Chinese Study Bible, and serving as a translation consultant for several aboriginal/indigenous Old Testament projects.

On Wednesday, we visited Mackay Memorial Hospital (MMH) and on Thursday, Paul gave his testimony to the students and faculty at Taiwan Theological Seminary. After all the activity and fatigue from our busy schedule, I came down with a cold/flu. As a result, on Friday, Paul went alone to Tamsui to visit some friends there. Tamsui is where the first PCC missionary, the Rev. Dr. George Leslie Mackay, landed in 1872.

On Saturday, Paul preached at the Hakka Fellowship which meets on Saturday mornings at Sung-Lien Presbyterian Church. Over 80 people attended. Worship was followed by their usual community lunch and singing time. What joy they have praising the Lord through their solos and duets and giving testimonies of God's grace.

On Sunday, we got up around 5:00 a.m., finished packing, and took a taxi over to Sung-Lien Presbyterian Church to join the Hakka fellowship group. We travelled together by bus to Hsinchu (New Bamboo) for the big Hakka Bible celebration. On the way, a microphone was passed around the bus. People shared their gratitude to God for the new Bible and added words of mutual encouragement. Some of the translators and their spouses shared stories about their translation experiences. When it came my turn, I read Psalm 118:24 in Hakka: *"Yà he Song Chù sò thin ke ngìt chȕ; ngái-tĕu oi fŏn-fŏn hì-hì lói khin chùk!"* It truly was a day for rejoicing and being glad.

The celebration began with a joint worship service. The Moderator of the PCT preached and the Hakka Mission Presbytery's choir sang. The Bible translation team leader, Rev. Pang Det-kui, gave an overview of the translation project from 1984 to 2012. His younger brother, Rev. Pang Det-shu, reflected on the joys and challenges of translating the scriptures and thanked God for sparing him after a heart-attack to complete his part of the project. Paul shared words of thanksgiving to God and to members of the team. It was obvious to everyone how close the whole team had become over the years they worked together. Rev. Andrew Tsai Lin-chen, General Secretary of the Bible Society in Taiwan, presented each member of the translation team with an enscribed leather-bound Hakka Bible. After lunch, everyone was sent on their way encouraged by the fellowship and challenged to read and study God's word and share it with others. About 1300 people from Hakka churches all around the island attended this special day of celebration. Praise be to God!

Thursday, April 26, was our 32nd wedding anniversary! Paul took me out to one of the translation team's favourite noodle spots for a delicious and nutritious lunch—total cost for the two of us was $3 Canadian! Afterwards, we spent several hours writing our previous blog entries (the first time we had a chance to do so). For dinner, we went to the Tai-syi-hee Fan-diam (Big 4 Happy Restaurant) for jow-dzs, shredded pork in onion pancake wraps, and won-ton soup; then we walked 'home' in the rain.

On Friday morning, the Rev. Dzen Dzen-dzung picked us up in Chung-lak (Centre of the Valley) and drove us to his home in Chuk-dung (East Bamboo) where we were greeted by his wife Maria and son Daniel. Together we went to a European-style restaurant located in the sub-tropical forested area where the owner's mother treated us to a lovely meal. The Dzens met her a year or so ago and over several months shared the gospel with her. She was baptized last July.

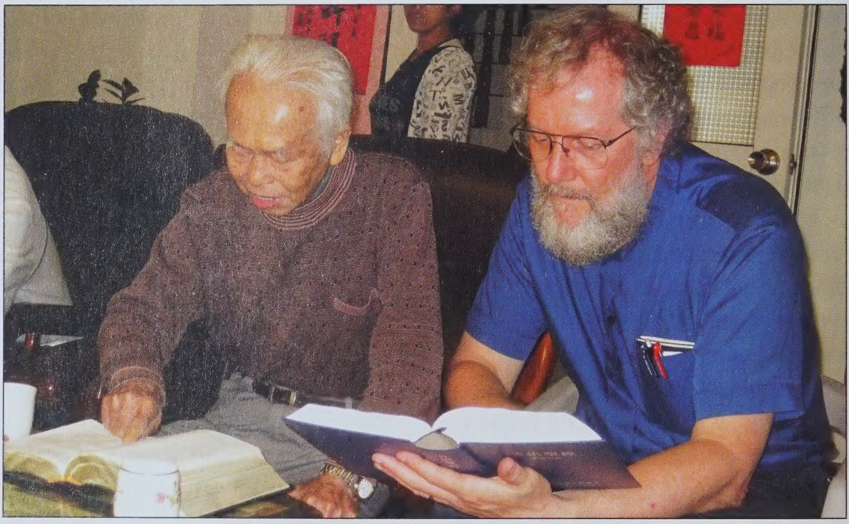
On Saturday afternoon, we visited Hiu Dzong-lo (Elder Hui, now in his mid-70s) who shared fascinating stories about how his family and friends became Christians. When his grandfather became a Christian in his 50s, his son (Hiu Dzong-lo's father) was very angry to the point where he burned down his father's tea fields. After the tea business failed, the family had to move from the mountain foothills to the plains. Years later, several families said they were sorry, but glad the tea business had failed because they became Christians as a result of Grandfather Hiu's testimony.

On Saturday evening, we were invited for dinner at the home of Rev. Ho Bit-on, who was also part of the Hakka Bible translation team and worked closely with Paul on the computerized Bible text. The Ho family lives in the same building as the church. We enjoyed a great time of food and fellowship with Pastor and Mrs. Ho and their two sons, Solomon and Timothy. We also had a time of prayer and singing with Rev. Ho's 86-year-old father, who is infirmed and who recently lost his wife. In recent weeks, he has been spending a couple of hours daily reading the newly published Hakka Bible and finds much comfort in it. On our way out, we dropped in on the youth group and shared a few words of encouragement with them.

On Sunday morning, Paul preached at the Chuk-dung Presbyterian Church. A new believer was also baptized. The baptism was followed by a very meaningful communion service and then a community "oi-tson" (love-feast/ meal). Rev. Ho drove us back to Chung-lak where we dropped in on 93-year-old Elder Liau Det-tiam and his wife for a short visit.

Tomorrow, we will be on our way back to Canada. This has certainly been a 'chin fung-foo' (very full) trip, a Holy Spirit-led adventure!

Elder Liau reads the Bible in Hakka with Paul. Paul and Elder Liau worked together with a team for many years to translate the Bible into the Hakka language.



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Anne Timmerman
Atwood ON

Donelda Corry
Ethel Corry
Lois Robinson
Listowel ON

June Simmons
Belmore ON

Larry Beverley
Port Colbourne ON

Dorothy Bell
Mississauga ON

2011 CERTIFICATES OF RECOGNITION

Jessie Birrell
Kamloops BC

Anna Bell
Susan Black
Swinton Park ON

Jessica Stewart
Fenwick ON

Kent Reynolds
Trish Reynolds
North Pelham ON

Jessie Anne
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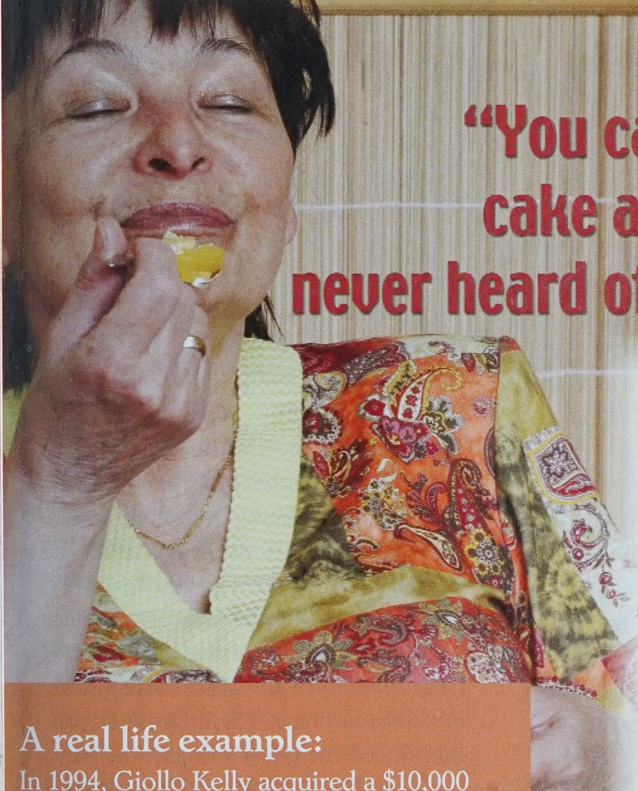

Whoever said, "You can't have your cake and eat it too," never heard of Gift Annuities

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In the Society

Synodical

The sun shone brightly as members from the Synodical of **Quebec & Eastern Ontario** met for their annual meeting at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Carleton Place on April 13-14. The theme was Christ for the World. The meeting began with the hymn, Christ for the world we sing. The Rev. Tony Boonstra, minister of St. Andrew's, extended a warm welcome and Joann Voyce gave an interesting oral history of the church since its beginnings in Beckwith Township in 1818.

Joan Hilliard, Synodical President, constituted the meeting with prayer. Then, roll call was taken, the 2011 minutes were read, and the reports were given. Margaret Reynolds presented the WMS Council Report.

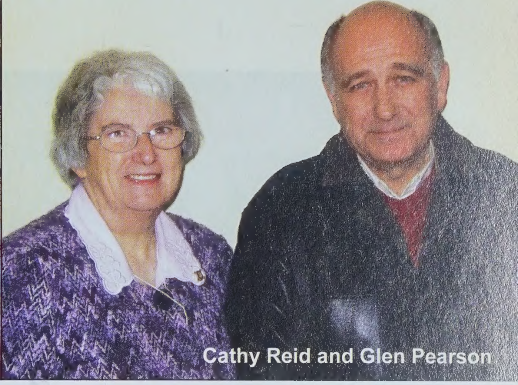
Our speakers, Catherine Blatch and Druse Bryan, described their visit to Action Réfugiés Montréal, which works with refugees held in detention. Council delegates were introduced and Presbyterial highlights for Brockville, Lanark-Renfrew, and Montréal areas were given. After a hearty supper prepared by the ladies of the host church, Patricia Labron performed some uplifting gospel music. This was followed by the Rev. Boonstra leading us in a communion worship service. The Rev. Dr. Ron Wallace, Associate Secretary for International Ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, then spoke on the topic of Mission Today.

On Saturday morning, our Area Educational Consultant, Christine Ball, led the worship service. Betty Zwiers, of Renfrew, read the In Memoriam names, while Mary Lynn McConnachie placed colourful butterflies on a budding branch. Joan McDiarmid, Dorothy Lowry, and Vivian Young gave The Seasons of Prayers. Life Membership certificates were awarded to dedicated members–Beth MacIntyre and Joan McDiarmid of Carleton Place. Then, Druse Bryan introduced the guest speaker, the Rev. Dr. Ron Wallace. Dr. Wallace showed slides of his trip to the Middle East and described the situation there.

In the afternoon, Anita Mack of Montréal, led a hymn sing. This was followed with the scarlet-clad Carleton Place ladies and their horses performing their version of The Musical Ride. Appropriate music was provided by the Rev. Larry Paul on the piano. More business followed with discussion regarding the structure of WMS. While the officers were installed, they placed curls of blue ribbon on a green wreath as their vows were made. The meeting was closed with prayer.

-Vivian Young

David Pàndy-Szekeres, Eleanor Crabtree, and Anne Yee Hibbs


Cathy Reid and Glen Pearson

Presbyterial

Sarnia Presbyterial met on a glorious March day—it felt more like May—for their annual meeting. We met in Petrolia with the theme Mano a Mano: Hand in Hand. Kim Walko, our guest speaker, who is the President of the WMS auxiliary in Petrolia and also a member of the Foundation for Peace, a non-profit aid organization which has been working in the Dominican Republic for 20 years, spoke about the Foundation for Peace's recent work in Haiti. In Haiti, the emphasis is on schools, then water systems, and then churches. There is much desperation, but there is hope in the people's eyes.

The Rev. Anne Yee Hibbs also joined us in the morning to talk about Ride the Cariboo Trail. She showed us how to find resources on the Internet to use with the study.

The Rev. Harvey Osborne led the installation of the new slate of officers and the final devotion on the theme, What does the Lord require of you? and Joyce Pritchard led the In Memoriam tribute.

-Suzanne Mater

London Presbyterial held their 97th annual meeting on a snowy day at North Caradoc-St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, near Strathroy, on January 19. Think Globally—Act Locally was the theme for the day. The day began with refreshments and a sing-a-long, and with Presbyterial President, Cathy Reid, Host Minister, Kathy Fraser, and Host WMS President, Lily Carruthers, all giving a welcome, and the Rev. John Bannerman bringing greetings from the London Presbytery.

Reports were then read and adopted and the new officers were installed. Glen Pearson, from the London Food Bank, was our guest speaker. He, and his wife Jane Roy, were instrumental in establishing the Food Bank 25 years ago. They both continue to work at the Food Bank and also, 13 years ago, established a slave redemption program in Sudan. Glen spoke passionately about both his experience working in the Food Bank, and also their travels to Darfur.

The afternoon began with another sing-a-long, and Margaret Fields and Dorothy Walker led worship. Due to

The WMS is thankful for so many of our associate groups. Pictured is the Janet Thomson group of Kerrisdale Presbyterian Church of Vancouver, BC.

the weather, our afternoon speakers were unable to attend, so after the closing remarks, courtesies, and singing, One More Step along the world, we headed out on the snowy roads.

-Elaine Brown

The **West Toronto** Presbyterial Annual Meeting was held on Saturday, March 24, at First Hungarian Presbyterian Church. President Janet Brewer offered greetings and led the worship service titled Faithful Followers from the March-April *Glad Tidings* magazine, with the participation of several readers.

David Pàndy-Szekeres, our guest speaker, spoke on the work that has been accomplished and on-going in the Sub-Carpathian Ukraine, with a good visual display of the area and the people with whom he works.

Betty Stainton gave a short review of the books displayed on the book table, followed by a delicious lunch served by a few ladies from First Hungarian. David continued with his talk in the afternoon, describing work that is being carried out with the Roma community, both in the Ukraine and now in Toronto. David thanked the WMS for their contribution to the establishment of needed schools in the area where he works.

The Rev. Zoltan Vass, minister of First Hungarian, installed the officers and Janet Brewer gave a prayer in memory of Norma Prior. The Rev. Vass and David Pándy-Szekeres concluded our annual meeting with a meaningful communion service.

Local

The Kenyon WMS celebrated its 135th Anniversary on October 11, 2011, with a delicious lunch, followed by a beautiful cake. Then we had a

Kenyon WMS: Catherine Hartrick, Catherine MacRae, Margaret MacLeod, Evelyn MacQueen, Gwen Arkinstall, Dona Addison, Eunice Nixon, Eileen Campbell, Elizabeth Stewart, Lynda Heinsma, Sheila Paterson, Annabelle Hartrick, Barbara Ewing, Julia Apps-Douglas, and Flora Chisholm.

Thanksgiving meeting led by the Rev. Julia Apps-Douglas. Christine Ball, our regional staff representative, was the guest speaker and Joyce Bender sang two lovely songs. We had several guests who were descendants of the organizers.

Two ladies of the Margaret Ramsay Auxiliary WMS in Leamington (and a friend), had knitted eight large blankets, which we mailed to Winnipeg Inner City Missions. One of the blankets was presented to Tina, and here is her story.

Tina lives at Anishinabe Place of Hope run by Winnipeg Inner City Missions of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Tina is a recovering addict with two years of sobriety. She worked the streets for years, was addicted, and stole and sold herself to get the drugs she needed. She is now on her way to a new and positive life. Thanks be to God.

She says that without Place of Hope she would still be on the streets. With a clean place to live, and support from the staff, she is now completing her 2nd year of college. She is looking forward to finding a job after graduation and living a positive life.

Tina is taking an administrative assistant college course. She would like to work for an organization like Winnipeg Inner City Missions to help her people. The Rev. Margaret Mullin said they did not have the funds to hire her, but because she was so desperate for such a position, she would be seeking grants to complete this success story.

Please keep Tina and WICM in your prayers, so that Tina's success story can be completed in a position with Winnipeg Inner City Missions.

Knox Burgoyne Ontario 150th year
Burgoyne WMS 111th year
29 April, 2012 Mission Awareness Sunday

back row L to R: Soyoung Moon, Rev. Chuck Moon, Angelia Burkinshaw, Leone Gingrich, Joyce Thede

front row L to R: Judy Morrow, Ruth Boyes, Rae Salmon, Janet Gowanlock, Diane Maggs, Donna Cook (absent)

Forward in Faith

Some of you know my little sidekick Riley, my dog. Riley recently came to our Synodical Annual Meeting weekend in Cobourg. He slept in his bed under the pew, in front of me, and behaved very well all weekend. I think he is aptly named as he does live the "life of Riley." He accompanies me many days on my visits to other churches and to church offices, and makes himself at home and comfortable any place he goes. Riley attends many meetings and we always joke and say that he is in charge of "dogmatics."

Riley has a strange habit during his regular walks of stopping and starring *behind* him. It sometimes takes quite a bit of convincing to get him to start his walk again. He just stands and stares. He often misses other potential adventures in front of him—other dogs and people—just because he isn't moving forward or looking ahead.

I often think about our church when this happens with Riley. How often do we stand and look backwards at the glories of our past—numbers in the pews, what we were able to do, or how it used to be. What do we miss about our present and future when we constantly look at the past? Do we miss opportunities? Are we stagnant in our beliefs? Does God really want us to be stationary?

I think we need to remember the past, but not glorify it. We need to bring the lessons we learned and apply them to today, but we need to learn new lessons, too. I think we must take steps of faith into the future knowing God is with us at all times and in all places.

This also applies to our WMS Groups. At our recent WMS Council Executive meeting, we decided that change must happen and a task force has been struck to look into our future, and bring suggestions for change to the executive meeting in 2013. It is a huge task of dreaming, or planning, and of faith. For us, we are looking forward.

In the meantime, Riley keeps staring behind him, convinced that something is sure to happen if he just waits long enough.

Yours in Christ Jesus,
Janet Brewer

"... and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28: 20 (KJV)

Circulation Reminder:

If your group/congregation has appointed a new *Glad Tidings* contact person, let Katherine Allen know as soon as possible so that we can send the Summer mailing to the correct person. If possible, please include the name of your congregation and group number when corresponding.

Remembering

Elaine Tyler
Marie Douglas WMS Group,
Gordon Presbyterian Church,
Burnaby BC

Helen Hertel
St. Andrew's Hespeler,
Cambridge ON

Margaret Enstone
WMS, St. Andrew's Church,
Guelph ON

Anne (Storey) Hiscocks
(Deaconess)
Edythe Murray
WMS, Embro ON

Helen Carmichael
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Marjorie Thomsen
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Mary McKenzie Evening
Auxiliary WMS, Valetta
Presbyterian Church,
Merlin ON

Ruth Kirkwood
Knox Presbyterian Church
WMS, Morrisburg ON

Lorna Smith,
WMS associate group,
Westminster Church,
Pierrefonds PQ

Margaret Watt
Stewartville WMS (disbanded), Stewarton ON

Jean Fryfogel
Knox, North Easthope
WMS, Stratford ON

Kay Greer
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Than Mission,
Thunder Bay ON

Margaret Kimpton
Lakeview Presbyterian
WMS, Thunder Bay ON

Mrs. Marion Ewen
Uxbridge WMS,
Uxbridge ON

Winnie Nash
WMS Auxiliary, St. James
Presbyterian Church,
Winnipeg MB

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Margaret Vanderzweerde
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Ina Borger
Millie Freeman
Joan Hilliard
Linda Grace
Betty McLagan
Arline Sanderson

General Secretary of Life and Mission Agency

Rick Fee

TOGETHER WE CAN!

Together with other WMS groups, congregations, and mission-minded people ***We Can*** make a difference.

Maternal and Child Health in Malawi

Becoming a mother and caring for young children is risky in developing countries like Malawi, where the maternal and child mortality rates are among the highest in the world. The WMS is working through PWS&D to make lasting improvements to the health and well-being of vulnerable women and children in Malawi.

Ministry with Aboriginal People in Canada

Help provide vital services to Aboriginal people in British Columbia and Saskatchewan. Your gift will help build relationships, share the church, feed the hungry, and nurture the less fortunate.

More information will be sent to WMS groups in August or contact wms@presbyterian.ca

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Glad Tidings

September/October 2012

in Partnership
1991- 2011

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Cover Photo: Della Griffen, a WMS member from Stayner. Taken by C. Carmichael, PCC.

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September/October 2012

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Canada

Glad Tidings reports on aspects of the Women's Missionary Society on all levels. *Glad Tidings* challenges concerned Christians to reflect on their faith through articles and reports related to mission and social justice issues, locally, nationally, and internationally. *Glad Tidings* through its content, encourages readers to become informed, educated, inspired, and motivated to action. *GladTidings* provides a forum for a broad spectrum of opinion and information, thus the views expressed in features, news reports, letters, and book reviews are not necessarily endorsed by the WMS or by the Editor.

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Writing my editorial today, it is a lovely summer day—sunny with a cool wind after many days of heat and humidity in Southern Ontario. The July first weekend is coming up, and I look forward to a few days of vacation. Yet, before that, my schedule is one of busyness. I am editing this edition of *Glad Tidings* and preparing to attend the Canada Youth conference in St. Catharines, Ontario. My head is full and my body weary.

Many of you, with the beginning of the Fall season, might be feeling the same. As you embark on this season, amidst the busyness, I remind you of the importance of caring for you ... of caring for the whole you—body, mind, and spirit.

Generally in the church, we consider the first priority to be the soul. If you are not nurturing your spirit, I remind you of the importance of worshipping in a faith community, spending time in scripture and prayer, and surrounding yourself with spiritual friends for the journey. I have seen the great faith of so many of you and see it played out in your WMS groups—these are spiritual groups, not just gatherings for 'business'. You worship, pray, study scripture, support one another, and serve each other and those in need.

You also nurture your minds through study. In this month's *Glad Tidings*, you will find the second mission study on Children in Poverty in Canada. I hope this will stretch your mind and your spirit.

But, this Fall, don't deny your body. It is easy to get into bad habits when we are busy—eating poor quality food and not taking the time to exercise. The impact may catch up to us almost immediately—in headaches, stiff muscles, or poor sleep quality—or it may show up much later in life, but it will show up! God gave us amazing bodies and the bounty of creation to nurture them. When we do, we have more energy, better sleep, clearer minds, and the ability to better serve God and others. Get out today and enjoy a short walk, some stretching, or lift a few weights. Thank God for this day, and remember that a few minutes in taking care of you can make a huge difference in your work in the world.

Thanksgiving Worship

by Rev. Margaret Robertson

Call to Worship

Leader: We gather to worship and to give thanks for all the wonders around us.

People: For the bounty of opportunities and the beauty of the world at this time of year.

Leader: Come, let us worship.

Hymn: #555 Worship the Lord, verses 1, 2, 3, and 5

Prayer (unison)

Generous God, we do raise our hands in devotion to you. We come to praise and to open our lives to your leading. We have often failed to acknowledge, even to recognize your work in our lives. So we pray for openness to hear your word in this time of worship. Amen.

Scripture: Psalm 111 (*You may want to read this responsively.*)

Guided Meditation

(*A guided meditation is a time to reflect quietly on our thankfulness and on life. Written for two voices, it should be read slowly.*)

Voice 1: Sit comfortable in your chair/pew, feet on the floor, back straight. You may close your eyes if you wish.

Imagine you are driving through the countryside, past fields of harvest. You are on your way to your favourite quiet place—outdoors, away from the busyness of life. You arrive and find the path that takes you through the woods. You begin your walk.

It is a day to be thankful. You can hear the wind whistling gently through the pine trees. Ash, maple, oak, and birch leaves float quietly around you. Your feet make a rustling noise as you walk through the fallen leaves.

Voice 2: The words, *Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them*, come to mind.

Voice 1: Overhead you can see and hear Canada geese flying towards the water. Blackbirds are gathering for their Fall migration. A woodpecker works hard to find insects in a nearby dying tree—tap, tap, tap … tap, tap, tap.

Your trail leads you to the river (*substitute lake or pond if it is more meaningful for your area*). As you get closer you can hear the ducks along the shore—quack, quack, quack. As you arrive, a fish jumps up in the water. It is a peaceful, sacred place, full of memories.

Voice 2: *Great are the works of the Lord.*

Voice 1: You remember childhood days here … skipping stones on the water, fishing from the shore, floating on homemade rafts. It is a sacred place for you. It brings calm … and peace … and wonder into your life.

What a wonderful world God has created!

What a safe and serene place to come for rest and relaxation!

Voice 2: *Great are the works of the Lord.*

Voice 1: When you are ready, you may open your eyes.

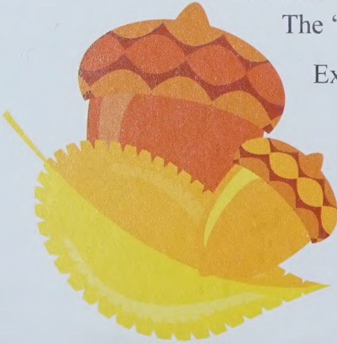
Hymn #637 Take my life, and let it be consecrated

Scripture Romans 12:1–7 (A New Life in Christ)

Message

It is easy to concentrate on one aspect of life and miss something else. We are reminded by Paul's letter to the church in Rome that there is new life in Christ and that we should *present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God*. How can we do that when we neglect some parts of our lives? We get busy with meetings, social events, and/or caring for other people and miss looking after ourselves—physically, mentally, intellectually, and psychologically. If we work on all these, we are better equipped to be spiritually healthy.

There is a wonderful video on YouTube: *23 ½ hours: What is the Single Best Thing You Can Do For Your Health*. Done in cartoon form, the narrator begins by saying he has found a wonderful preventive medicine. It helps with potential health problems, such as arthritis, dementia/Alzheimer's, risk of hip fracture, anxiety, depression, risk of early death, fatigue, and lack of quality of life. This 'medicine' reduces all these factors from 23% to 50%. The 'medicine' is … exercise … one half-hour a day.



Exercise can increase your quality of life in all areas.

It is easy to not exercise.

Voice 1: I'm too tired
Voice 2: I don't have time.
Voice 3: I have every excuse you can think of.

It is interesting to note that we are in the prime of our life when we are in our early 30s. After about the age of 40, we start to lose muscle mass. Muscle loss varies from person to person, but on average we lose muscle at a rate of 5% to 15% each decade after age 40, 20–40% of our muscle strength can be lost by the sixth or seventh decade of life. Researchers believe a good deal of muscle loss associated with aging can be attributed to physical inactivity (especially resistance exercise), poor diet, hormonal changes, and inadequate sleep. Maintaining our muscle mass is an absolute essential for being healthy, vital, and independent as we grow older.

Losing muscle reduces our ability to expend energy. It sets the stage for weight gain. It can make muscles resistant to insulin, increasing the risk of diabetes. It weakens our bones, increasing the risk of osteoporosis. It affects our balance, making us susceptible to falls and broken bones. It makes us look older. And it can lead to frailty over the long term and eventually dependence on others.

(*You may choose to have a second voice or various voices read this section.*)
On the other hand, resistance training (weights and resistance tubes or bands):

- Maintains or builds muscle mass
- Improves strength in muscles as well as connecting tendons and ligaments
- Improves/maintains bone density and reduces risk of osteoporosis
- Boots metabolic rate (more muscle burns more calories, even at rest)
- Helps with weight loss or maintaining a healthy weight
- Improves balance
- Reduces the risk of muscles becoming insulin resistant
- Promotes stable blood sugar and reduces risk of diabetes
- Helps curb depression
- Helps with arthritis pain (supports and reduces the load on joints)
- Reduces the risk of joint injury
- Helps with lower back pain
- Promotes better sleep
- Improves coordination among muscle groups
- Improves posture
- Makes daily activities easier
- Improves self confidence

You may think that this is impossible. But I have learned through my volunteer position, working with people with chronic illnesses, that even starting light makes a difference. If you don't have weights, use two cans of soup or other household objects that give you the weight you need. I've seen people start with only the arm motions and work up to one pound weights,

then on to more. Even if you need to sit at first, it's more than you were doing before.

Cardio is also important. Do more than you are doing now. If you sit a lot, find walking breaks. Go to the mailbox, walk to a neighbour's, vacuum a little longer at a time. Increase your time, little by little. It all adds up.

In the fitness program, I see people making noticeable changes in just two or three weeks. If they are faithful and diligent, they find bigger changes in the six weeks of the program. The biggest payoff beyond the physical changes is they feel better about their self, have more energy, better agility, clearer thinking, and are even able to reach higher. Studies show that just two months of regular strength training can start to reverse two decades of a typical sedentary person's muscle loss.

In the letter to the Romans, Paul reminds us not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by renewal of mind. *Conformed to this world* …. It is easy to look for a quick fix on life. The media presents a multitude of diet plans and exercise gadgets that sound like the solution. It's easy to 'buy into' them. But in reality, slow and steady wins the race. Nothing is as healthy and long lasting as following Canada's Food Guide and doing regular exercise (both cardio and resistance).

When our bodies are physically healthy, our minds are clearer and healthier. We open ourselves to spiritual health. Well-being of body energizes us.

Eugene Peterson, in The Message, translates Romans 12:2 this way:

> *Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.*

Feeling well physically leads to spiritual well-being. It is important to be healthy in body, mind, and soul—physically, intellectually, and spiritually—three interconnected areas.

When we are healthy in every way possible, we can come before God with even more thankfulness. We have done our part, now we can let God enter into our lives in new and mysterious ways.

Prayer

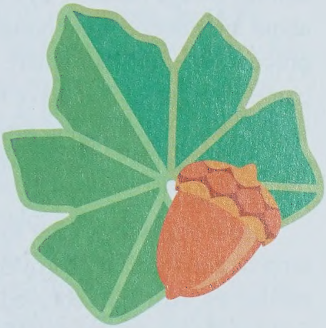
God of all creation, we thank you for the many ways you work in our lives. We think we are complete, yet you extend our knowledge, our understanding, and our faith. Thank you for the opportunities that come our way, especially the ones that help us to know you better.

We know that you bring us together for worship, but then you send us out to serve. Lead us now into your world, serving in the ways you teach us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn: #457 Now thank we all our God or #648 I'm gonna live so God can use me.

Benediction

May the God of all life grant us peace and love,
as we go out in thankfulness and service
in the name of God,
Creator, Redeemer, and Saviour.



Margaret Robertson, designated in 1967, ordained in 1997, is a retired minister of our church, who volunteers in a number of areas including Fitness for Life, a program for people with chronic illnesses.

Presbyterian Wins at Writing Awards

Jayne E. Self won the Best Mystery category and honourable mention for the Grace Irwin Award, at the 24th Annual Canadian Christian Writing Awards for her book, *Murder in Hum Harbour*. The Grace Irwin Award represents Canada's largest award for a writer who is Christian. Self's book was one of five out of 53 books, shortlisted for the award. Along with Self, Greg Paul's, *Close Enough to Hear God Breathe* also received honourable mention, and Deb Elkink's book, *The Third Grace*, won this year's award.

Self has recently become the Assistant Director of Canada's largest Christian writers' conference, Write! Canada. Look for her next book, *Death of a Highland Heavyweight: A Seaglass Mystery*, due out this August.

The WMS was well represented at this year's awards with Colleen Wood and Susan Clark, The Book Room Manager, in attendance. The WMS sponsored an award at this year's event.

Armagh
Comes of Age

by Heather deSilva

Like anyone, or anything, the coming of age (usually 21), brings about an introspective thought process. We consider where we have come from, where we have been, where we are going, and how we have done so far. Today, Armagh is 21years old.

In the beginning, after long-term negotiations with government ministries, Armagh received approval and funding to proceed with second-stage housing for victims of family violence. This, along with funds raised and donated by the Women's Missionary Society, allowed renovations to be done to provide eight self-contained apartments for women and their children, allowing them to receive housing and programming for up to one year. In 1991, Armagh welcomed its first residents into the program. It became, at that time, one of six second-stage homes in Ontario. Today, there are approximately 20 second-stage homes in Ontario, yet Armagh is still the only second-stage housing program serving the Region of Peel, with a current population of 1.2 million.

Although there are many crisis shelters for women to go to when they first leave their abusive partner, the timeline for this stay is relatively short, and most usually not long enough for the family's many issues to be sorted through. Within the Region of Peel, a big challenge comes to light when the end of the shelter stay looms. Where will she go now? If she is alone, she may have a relative or friend she can move in with. She may chance the streets. Apparently, many women find they can manage in good weather outside, if they just keep to themselves and try to be careful. But with children—that's a very different situation—she won't be taking them to the streets. Often, no one can take them all in. Many times, she can't afford the market rents. She may have come to Canada recently and left her entire support system behind in her home country. She may not have English as her first language. She may have no marketable job skills. She may have never written a cheque, or used a computer, or filled out a government form. She may have put all her eggs in *his* basket and hitched all her dreams on *his* star! And then, he betrayed her trust.

One of things we have learned over our infancy, our youth, our teens, and now we know for certain, is that abuse is not about anger. It is about control. The abuser has a need to feel in control and as the economy has slipped, and perhaps he has lost control in the financial area, he has heightened his control on his partner and directed all blame on her. Sadly, in turn, she has come to believe that all of his problems are her fault. If only she could be prettier, better, smarter, sexier, kinder, a better cook, a better cleaner, he would not abuse her and he would be successful. The incidence of abuse is rising at an alarming rate. Also, abuse and control often lead to pregnancy so many of our residents arrive pregnant or with very young children.

Abuse has no boundaries or borders. It crosses all ethnicities, faiths, education levels, and income levels. The type of abuse may change depending on what the lifestyle of the family is, but what does not change is the depth of the pain or suffering of the victims.

We know for sure that abuse is a societal issue. It belongs to everyone. The abused women and children—they are all of our sisters, mothers, daughters, and sons, and we know for sure that no woman or child should have to try to heal and deal with their physical, emotional, psychological, financial, sexual, and/or legal injuries and issues alone.

Armagh provides a safe, supportive environment which works within the belief system that every person has the right to live without fear of physical, sexual, emotional,

PUT YOURSELF IN HER SHOES
I AM MAN ENOUGH TO WALK A MILE IN HER SHOES
I AM MAN ENOUGH TO WALK A MILE IN HER SHOES
I AM MAN ENOUGH TO WALK A MILE IN HER SHOES

psychological, or financial abuse; that women and men should have equal opportunities to develop their potential to live full and rich lives; and that all women have the right to choose the direction their lives will take, according to their personal values, beliefs, and needs. Some of the women who come to reside at Armagh maintain jobs. Some are home with babies. Some of the women are enrolled in English as a Second Language classes, while others are in college. Each woman's circumstance is unique. Their only commonality is abuse. With support, they could be guided to apply for Ontario Works, adult education programs, counselling services, Family Education Centre services, Family Services of Peel, or to one of the many other services available in Peel. Throughout their stay at Armagh, the women attend groups and counselling services addressing self-esteem, budgeting, life skills, conflict resolution, decreasing vulnerability, and parenting support. Everything that is done with and for the women and children is aimed at rebuilding their feeling of self-worth and teaching them the skills they will need for independent living.

> We are determined to spread the word that abuse cannot be tolerated and that it must be dealt with by the entire community.

Most importantly, our hope for the children who reside here, is that the cycle of abuse that has thus far been modelled for them will be replaced with an empowering and peaceful, non-violent way of living, which they will emulate as they grow older and establish their own families.

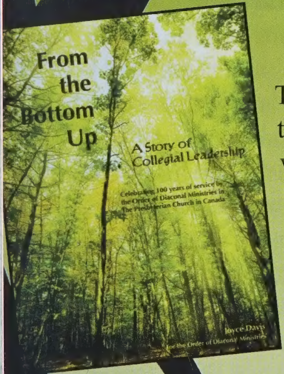
We are determined to spread the word that abuse cannot be tolerated and that it must be dealt with by the entire community. It is a heavy topic and we have found, therefore, that approaching it in a somewhat light fashion, gathers both an audience and their attention. Therefore, in 2011, Armagh held their 1st Annual Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event—a first in the Region of Peel. Walk a Mile in Her Shoes is a playful opportunity for men to raise awareness in their community about the serious causes, effects, and ramifications of violence against women. The brave men, "man enough to walk a mile in her shoes," gather sponsors to pledge money for them to put on four-inch high-heeled shoes as they proudly walk, stumble, run, or limp one mile to Armagh. There, Peel Regional Police sponsor a BBQ, a masseuse gently massages tired feet, and party music blares! We award a prize for the first to complete, the best dressed (oh yes some do dress the part!), and the most money raised, but more importantly, the issue of abuse and the Armagh name and profile is raised. Many of the walkers suffer some pain and blisters. That is really part of the point … to, for a moment, feel 'her' pain.

We think we have stumbled onto the perfect venue for our charity's needs and now 21 years old, we are proudly stepping out in four-inch heels and making ourselves known. We are no longer in hiding. We are no longer frightened. We are certainly careful and vigilant, but we now know for sure, when people know the facts, when they really understand the situation, they want to help us. We need help. It is, therefore, our job to tell the stories. We are determined and, step by step, we are going to help to build lives free of violence.

From the Bottom Up

A Story of Collegial Leadership

by Joyce Davis


From the Bottom Up
A Story of Collegial Leadership
Celebrating 100 years of service by the Order of Diaconal Ministries in The Presbyterian Church in Canada
Joyce Davis
for the Order of Diaconal Ministries

The Order of Diaconal Ministries is delighted to announce the publication of this inspiring story of those (mostly) women, who laboured so long and hard within The Presbyterian Church in Canada to plant churches, welcome immigrants, inspire children and youth, visit the lonely and countless other ministries. Beginning in 1908, the story includes really many stories—stories of courage, faith, adventure, and selfless service.

An appealing feature of the book is that many of the stories are told in the first person by the workers themselves. From learning to drive a team of reluctant horses to leading congregations through change (a not dissimilar task), these servants carried out their ministries.

This book is history, but it is more than history. It is a very readable exploration of the question, "What is diaconal ministry?" and it builds a strong case for a style of leadership that could help the church of today find its way to more effective ministry.

vailable now from The Book Room for just $20

MALAWI QUESTIONS

by Erin Joy Whittaker

In April, I travelled with ten other people, including three from my congregation, to Malawi, a small country in Africa, on a Presbyterian Church in Canada Mission and Study Tour. Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world; it has a high rate of HIV/AIDS and a life expectancy of only 50 years.

I think it would be both a cliché, and an inaccuracy, to say that the trip was "life changing" for me. My life, back here in Winnipeg, is still very much the same. I wake up, go to work, drink coffee from Starbucks, play ultimate Frisbee, and snuggle with my cats—pretty much exactly what I did before I left. A better way to describe my experience might be, "perspective altering" or "thought provoking." I left Malawi with more questions than answers, and more things to process and share than I could ever write about in one article.

One of the most common questions I get asked about my trip is, "What was your favourite part?" Initially, it was a very hard question to answer. I loved the trip! When I look back now, over a month since our plane left Malawi, it's easier to pick the things that stood out the most. The biggest thing is how incredibly hospitable, friendly, and spirit-filled the people we met in Malawi were. We were welcomed into churches, hospitals, schools, communities, and families with open arms and the phrase, "feel free." The family I stayed with even killed a chicken in my honour, which we then ate for dinner.

Photo: PCC/C. Carmichael

The people we met welcomed us as brothers and sisters in Christ, not as strangers of a strange colour, from across the world (other than a couple babies who burst into tears at the sight of my ghostly pale skin). The other thing which struck me is the incredible work God is doing in Malawi and the incredible people, who are His arms, legs, hands, eyes, and body. The programs and sites we visited on our trip were all operated by the Blantyre Synod Health and Development Commission. This organization is funded in part through Presbyterian World Service and Development, as well as other partner churches and agencies across the world.

The second question I get asked is, "So, what did you do?" People hear I've been to Africa with a church group and immediately they assume that I built something—a school or a well perhaps—or that I trained someone in something, ran a children's program, or operated some sort of feeding program. Most people quickly lose interest when I say that I did none of those things, or alternately, when I say "everything!" The purpose of the trip was not to go in, do, and leave. The purpose of the trip was learning, communicating, sharing, and simply being.

One of the places we visited was a club for people with disabilities, called the Tzdilerana club. The club is self-governing, and it has rules, bylaws, and a committee in charge. It's pretty amazing. They meet each Tuesday afternoon in a Catholic church for worship, prayer, snacks, games, crafts, socialization, and peer and professional support. The club involves both adults and children in the community (who are living with a disability) and their main support person.

The day we came to the club, there was a lot going on. I walked in, and was shaking hands and introducing myself to people. I bent down to shake hands with a little girl and when she didn't let go I decided to sit down beside her. This progressed to her sitting on my lap, and then finally falling asleep in my arms. From our seat against the wall, I got a good view of everything that was going on.

After a time of worship, people spread out—some doing a craft; some playing soccer with people from our team; others reading books, playing with toys, talking and socializing; mothers rolling their children back and forth over an exercise ball to stretch their stiffened or spastic muscles; people gathering around to get first aid supplies for the week ahead; and one-on-one interaction between club members and the volunteers. I got the chance to talk to a newer member of the club and hear her story of losing her leg after being assaulted and robbed. She is no longer able to carry water for her family. I said almost nothing, as she spoke through a translator. I simply sat with her and was present with her in her pain and in her faith.

The club didn't need us to come and do something. They didn't need us to build a new building, lead a program, or fix something that was broken. For us to come and do these things would not have been helpful and might, in fact, have been harmful. The members were simply excited to have visitors from Canada, meet people from The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and share as brothers and sisters in Christ, and we were excited to meet them too! The people we met in Malawi are very capable, very knowledgeable, and very willing to do what needs to be done. The biggest challenges seem to be lack of financial resources and infrastructure, certainly not a lack of people.

The third question people ask me is "Are you going back?" The answer, like the answer to what my favourite part of the trip was, is not an easy one. Malawi was amazing, if for no other reason than that my highly allergic self was not allergic to *anything* in Malawi and I didn't have to take a single allergy pill. In all seriousness though, I hope to go back, perhaps not on another study tour, but as a team leader, or with a group entirely from my congregation at Trinity in Winnipeg. There was so much to see, so many people to meet, and so much to learn that I easily could have stayed twice as long. At this point in my life, God is not calling me to full-time ministry in Malawi, or anywhere overseas, but two years ago, I never thought I would ever go to Africa, so I'm leaving the door wide open for whatever God is doing and plans still to do.

Then, there's the question that I wish people would ask, "What can I do?" A big reason I went on this trip was to come back and tell other people about the amazing things the church is doing in Malawi. I know people don't always want to hear, "give money," but seeing just how far a little bit of money can go, and just how many things are going on, I am more convinced than ever that donating money is of huge value and importance. It is important to know that giving money to Presbyterian World Service and Development, Presbyterians Sharing, or the Women's Missionary Society isn't putting money into a black hole. The money goes to fund programs, operated through local partners, which impact *real people*. The programs we visited in Malawi would have a very difficult time operating without the support of money donated by Presbyterians in Canada, and the funding for the missionaries would simply not exist (note, PWS&D funds the relief and development programs, while Presbyterians Sharing funds the overall mission of the PCC, including the international mission staff).

What else can you do? Pray for our missionaries, both in Malawi and around the world. Pray for the people of Malawi and the work of the church there. Become educated—read the materials that get handed out in your bulletin, go hear missionaries speak when in Canada on furlough or hear the presentations of returning mission teams, read the news to find out what's happening in the world, and use the Internet to find out more information about the work of the church across the world. And lastly, go on a trip! Each year, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has trips and study tours to places all over the world, where the church is working. These tours are for people like you. You don't have to be some sort of special person. You don't need extra qualifications to go. (You just need to be in good enough health to handle all the flying, climbing, cold showers, and lumpy beds). If you yourself can't go on the trip, you can always find a way to support someone who can!

Did Malawi change my life? Reading over my article, I begin to wonder if it did. Malawi renewed my hope in the future of the church. It changed the way I look at poverty and it reminded me that there are commonalities and connections among people all over the world. Maybe someday I'll go back, but for now I'll snuggle with my cats, worship with my church, and never forget my experience across the ocean.

You can read more about our mission staff in Malawi on their blogs:

Mike and Debbie Burns: http://pccweb.ca/mikeanddebbieburns/

Todd and Annika Statham: http://pccweb.ca/toddandannika/.

Photo: PCC/C. Carmichael

The WMS ... Did you Know?

by Dineke Kraay

Partner in Ministry, The Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC)

The Women's Missionary Society is active in a number of women's organizations within Canada and around the world. One of these is The Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC).

1. WICC, a national ecumenical Christian organization, began to take shape when representatives from five denominations gathered for a day of prayer in 1918. This day of prayer originated in a proposal for a united prayer for mission made by the Dominion Board of the Women's Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in 1916. By 1945, WICC was officially formed, with the ten denominations now represented. Council membership is by appointment or election. The motto of WICC reads: *Rooted in Faith, Called to Action.*

2. WICC has made a firm commitment to encourage women to grow in their understanding of authentic ecumenism. The organization urges women to join together in spirituality and prayer. WICC counsels all Christians to respond to national and international issues affecting women. In addition, the council recommends that actions for eco-justice and justice issues are taken by all Christians through a united effort.

3. WICC is committed to providing worship, theological, and educational resources that support its programs and is connected to its work on racial justice, poverty, human trafficking, and violence against women.

4. Coordinating the annual World Day of Prayer (WDP) service is an important aspect of the work of the Council. Each World Day of Prayer worship service has a special theme and is prepared by a specific country. The international WDP meeting chooses the theme for the next service as well as the country whose women will write the service. Women of each selected WDP Committee develop a common worship as well as Bible studies and a service for children. They also provide information on their country by issuing a DVD. At the Fall meeting, Council members work on the WDP service, adapting the liturgy for use in Canada.

5. Through preparation and participation in the worship service, we gather insight into how our sisters of other countries, languages, and cultures

understand the biblical passages in their specific context. We have an opportunity to hear their concerns and needs and we can feel ourselves in solidarity with them. In this way, it is possible to experience the richness of the Christian faith as it grows deeper and broader in an international, ecumenical expression.

6. The theme for WDP 2012 was *Let Justice Prevail* and the service was prepared by the women of Malaysia. A committee from France will prepare the order of worship for the year 2013 on the theme: *I was a Stranger and you welcomed me*. Women from around the world affirm their faith in Jesus Christ and share their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, and their opportunities and needs through the World Day of Prayer.

7. In Montreal and Saskatoon, a Festival Day has been held in preparation for the World Day of Prayer. On a Festival Day, the convenors of the regions and other interested people come together for a day of preparation. The group engages in a Bible study, reviews the material, and shares ideas to promote the WDP service. The DVD issued by the country where the women who wrote the WDP liturgy live, is reviewed. The evaluations of the two Festival Days held in Saskatoon were very, very positive. This is a new initiative and it is hoped that, in the coming years, more regional committees across Canada will consider planning and hosting a Festival Day.

8. The offering of the WDP services are forwarded to the national office of WICC in Toronto. At the Spring meeting of the Council, the members decide which international and domestic projects the offering will support by using a detailed grading system. The projects, which are supported during the current year, are listed on the back of the WDP service booklet.

9. WICC is also closely connected to the *Fellowship of the Least Coin*. The Fellowship is a global movement of prayer for justice, peace, and reconciliation. When women offer the least coin of their country, they offer up the following *Prayer for Peace*.

   Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth.
   Lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust.
   Lead me from hate to love, from war to peace.
   Let peace fill our heart, our world, our universe.

   Through this movement, Christian women around the world find fellowship with each other and are reminded to live a reconciled and forgiving life with others.

10. In memory of the victims of the Montreal massacre in 1989, WICC produces a liturgy for use on December 6, which is Canada's designated national day

of remembrance and action regarding violence against women. The liturgy is prepared annually and distributed free of charge.

11. In addition to coordinating the annual World Day of Prayer services, the Fellowship of the Least Coin, and the December 6 liturgy, WICC collaborates with other organizations on justice issues, such as racism, violence against women, and human trafficking. The Council works in partnership with groups, such as KAIROS and the *Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network* or CEARN, which operates under the umbrella of the Canadian Council of Churches.

12. Through *Women Doing Theology* conferences and resources, such as *Healing Waters, Some Women Amazed Us* by Bernice Santon, and *Racial Justice Resources* for March 21 services, WICC helps to connect people of faith who are diligently working for justice, eco-justice, and peace in church and society. WICC supported the World Council of Churches' *Decade to Overcome Violence* (DOV) which ran from 2001 to 2010.

13. The Council respects diversity; fosters connections between church and society; and creates opportunities for communication, education, advocacy, and theological critique. WICC encourages expressions of authentic spirituality rooted in the experience of women.

Dineke Kraay is the Presbyterian Denominational Appointee to the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada. Dineke lives in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. For more information on WICC, visit their website at www.wicc.org.

President's Itinerary

September 2–14: Taiwan and Korea, 90th Anniversary of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan's Women's Committee

October 22–November 1: Middle East Study Tour

November 5–7: Life and Mission Agency Meeting, Crieff ON

November 8–11: WMS Task Force and Council Executive

November 25–27: Assembly Council

My trip to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)'s Saskatchewan National Event

by Joan Smith

For four days in late June, representatives from The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Women's Missionary Society attended the TRC National Event in Saskatoon. It was a momentous, heart-rending event, beginning with the lighting of the Sacred Fire and Opening Ceremonies and ending with the Survivor Birthday Celebration and closing remarks. It was a gathering of diverse cultures, walking side by side.

This is one of the seven events being held by the TRC across Canada. These events provide those affected by the legacy of the Indian Residential School system with an opportunity to share their experiences in public and private sessions with Commissioners: the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair (Chair), Marie Wilson, and Chief Wilton Littlechild. An aim of the TRC is to determine the truth from the survivors and from those who worked in the schools. These events also serve to educate the broader Canadian public about Canada's 130-year history of residential schools. Each event has its own theme, Saskatoon's being Truth, with the overall theme of 'for the child taken, for the parent left behind' running through each.

We were there to hear the experiences and stories of the survivors and their families. We were there to grieve the past with them, ask for forgiveness, and break down barriers. We listened, through tears, along with the survivors and others who attended. It was difficult to hear about the 'take the Indian out of the child' policy. It was difficult to hear how the children felt abandoned, and about the physical, emotional,

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spiritual, and sexual abuse suffered by them. It was difficult to hear from one family that the compensation from the government worked out to be about nine cents for each day spent at a residential school.

Through posters, photographs, and videos, we were able to explore the history of residential schools in Canada at the Learning Place. It was here that survivors and their families were able to share their experience with church representatives in sharing circles or in one-on-one conversations, and to receive a personal apology. Kim Arnold, our PCC archivist, set up a wonderful display of pictures, which survivors were able to have copied to take with them. In some cases, this is the only pictorial record of their childhood.

The Rev. Dr. Vissers, Moderator of the 138th General Assembly, took part in the Circle of Reconciliation, an opportunity for survivors and representatives of the 2007 Settlement Agreement to discuss the importance of reconciliation. He placed a copy of the 1994 PCC Apology in the TRC Bentwood Box. This box reflects the strength and resilience of the survivors and their descendants, and honours those who are no longer living. At each national event, offerings are made to the Bentwood Box to commemorate journeys toward healing and reconciliation. During the Expression of Reconciliation time, Vissers shared some of the ways the PCC is working to live out its commitment to truth and reconciliation in Canada. He began by showing a one-minute clip of the, 'It Matters to Me' video, which features testimonies made by Presbyterians across Canada of what reconciliation means to them. The complete ten-minute video was put in the Bentwood Box.

At St. Andrew's Church, Saskatoon, the WMS sponsored a lunch for survivors and families, especially those who had attended the Birtle School run by Presbyterians. Chief Norma Johnstone, of the Mistawasis First Nation, attended and

photos: PCC/S. Kendall

joined us in the sharing circle after lunch. This was an emotional time as everyone was able to share stories and to say what reconciliation meant to them. Many tears were shed. The next morning the 'tissues of tears' were taken as an offering to the Sacred Fire for healing at the Sunrise and Pipe Ceremony. It was impossible not to feel the Spirit working amongst us as we heard signs of healing, reconciliation, and hope for the future.

On Friday, a great sign of hope was the 'Education Day' activities in which almost 2000 grade 7 and 8 students from Public, Catholic, and First Nations Schools took part. Justice Sinclair stressed that the educational system should include the perspectives of all Canadians, both aboriginal and non-aboriginal, as one of the keys to the future. Another sign of hope was the 'March 4 Justice'.

Five honourary witnesses were inducted during the event—Joe Clark, Sheila Fraser, Tina Keeper, Sidney Mead of New Zealand, and Jim Scarrow. They are tasked, along with witnesses chosen at the three preceding national events, to witness the stories of the survivors and share this history within their own spheres of influence.

Four TRC National Events have now been held—Winnipeg, Inuvik, Halifax, and Saskatoon. The remaining three will be in Quebec, Alberta, and Vancouver, with closing ceremonies in Ottawa. Watch for these events and plan to attend. It will change your life and your perspective while you witness the extraordinary courage of the survivors as they speak publicly about what they suffered. More information on the upcoming events can be found on the TRC website: www.trc.ca.

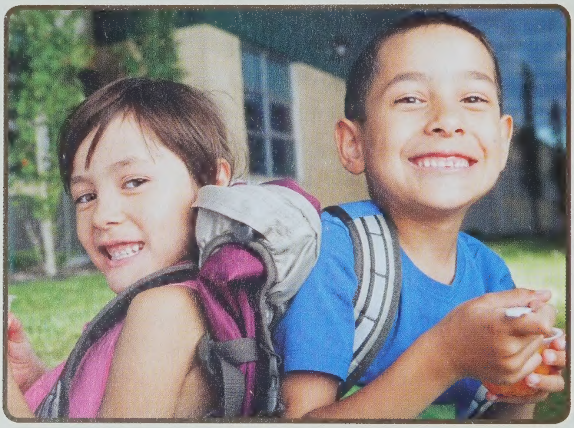
The representatives from The PCC were the Rev. Dr. John Vissers, the Rev. Stephen Kendall, the Rev. Dr. Rick Fee, David Phillips, Anne Phillips, and Kim Arnold. The three representatives from the WMS were the Rev. Sarah Kim, Joan Smith, and Janet Brewer. Seth Veenstra from the Record also attended.

Joan Smith
The Presbyterian Church in Canada
Stewart Folster
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Children in Poverty in Canada

Food Security

by Rev.
Helen Smith



Mission Study

This is the second of four mission studies looking at Children in Poverty in Canada. The study includes the following sub-topics:

- **Becoming Aware of the Canadian Situation** in the July–August 2012 edition
- **Housing** in the January–February 2013 edition
- **Education** in the May–June 2013 edition

Opening Prayer

God bless to us our bread
and give bread to all those who are hungry
and hunger for justice to those who are fed
God bless to us our bread.
-Prayer from Argentina

Introduction

During the month of October, we celebrate both Thanksgiving (this year on October 8) and World Food Day (October 16). Take this opportunity to focus on food security for children living in poverty in Canada. Food security is commonly understood to exist in a household when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for an active and healthy life.[i] Conversely, food insecurity occurs when food quality and/or quantity are compromised, typically associated with limited financial resources.[ii]

Biblical Reflection

Scripture: 1 Kings 17: 1, 8–16

- What were some of the causes of food insecurity in the widow's home?
- Put yourself in the widow's shoes. How do you feel about this solution to your food insecurity? How do you feel about yourself?

Scripture: Leviticus 19:9–10, Deuteronomy 24:19, Ruth 2: 1–9,

- What are some of the causes of food insecurity for Ruth and Naomi?
- What are some of the factors that lead to food security in this instance?
- Put yourself in Ruth's shoes. How do you feel about this solution to your food insecurity? How do you feel about yourself?

Scripture: John 6: 1–13

- What does the boy have in common with the widow, Ruth and Naomi?
- What are some of the factors that lead to food security in this instance?

Sing or read the words

When the poor ones (Book of Praise #762)

The reality for children living in poverty in Canada

In Canada in 2007–2008, 9.7% of households with children were food insecure.[iii]

Over half of households on social assistance are food insecure. Social assistance includes a variety of provincial and territorial programs. The most problematic is welfare, which often provides an income well below the basic living costs. At the same time, 57% of food insecure households were reliant on employment income. The income is usually a result of part-time work, low wages, and insufficient supplement transfers (e.g., tax credits).[iv] The dollars only stretch so far. People with inadequate income run out of money for food because the grocery budget is flexible, unlike fixed payments, such as rent and utility bills. Many factors, such as increases in rent or energy costs, job loss, or illness, can tip a vulnerable family into food insecurity.

Inadequate income can lead to inadequacies with regard to nutritious food, which leads to poor health, which leads to

38% of food bank users are children. 20% of people who use food banks are the working poor.

inadequate income, and we are caught in a vicious circle. Chronic health problems associated with household food insecurity include both the physical, for example, diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, asthma, and the mental, for example, mood or anxiety disorders caused by stress.[v]

For Discussion

How do you stretch your food dollars? A few ideas to discuss are: I have access to a computer so I can check out the weekly specials and comparison shop. I have a car. I can drive to the supermarket, so I don't depend on buying food from the corner store, which is usually more expensive than at the supermarket. Having a car, a home with lots of storage space and a freezer, means I can stock up on the specials. It seems that having money enables me to save on food purchases.

Responses to Food Insecurity

The Food Bank

The first food bank in Canada opened in Edmonton in 1981. This was to be a temporary, stop gap measure during a down-turn in the economy. As of March 2012, there are over 800 food banks in Canada.[vi] Many families depend on the food bank. 38% of food bank users are children. 20% of people who use food banks are the working poor.[vii] Food banks provide an opportunity for churches to act in a tangible way to relieve food insecurity. It can be most helpful to donate money to the food bank so that they can buy nutritious, fresh food to put in the food hampers.

Grandchildren are the crown of the aged.
Proverbs 17:6a (NRSV)

To Think About: Picture yourself in the grocery store. A stranger keeps adding items to your cart, and you can't put anything of your own choice in the cart. How do you feel about that? Maybe you have allergies or dietary restrictions. They are ignored. This can be what it is like to use a food bank. Many food banks do try to give some choice and honour special diets, but sometimes it is just not possible.

Breakfast, Lunch and Snack Programs

Perhaps the response that is most directly connected to children is that of breakfast, lunch and/or snacks programs for school children. These programs alleviate food insecurity and provide nourishment for learning. Teachers know that children cannot focus on their learning when they are hungry. Knowing that if there is no food at home, they will at least have food at school also gives the children a large sense of security. This may be their only food for the day. Most of these programs do not have a "means test," but are open to any student. This helps avoid stigmatization. Teachers are sensitive to those most in need and will encourage those who do not need the program to bring their own food. Many churches are involved with these programs, providing food and/or volunteer help.

To Think About: What would you put on the menu for a breakfast/lunch program? How could your group provide snacks that are healthy and appealing to children?

Community Gardens

Some Churches that have extra land have turned it over to a community garden, where people in the community can have a plot to grow food. Sometimes a nominal fee is charged. Often seminars on gardening are provided.

To Think About: Provided you have the land, what would it take for your church to have a community garden program?

Community Kitchens

Church kitchens often lend themselves well in providing space for a community kitchen. A community kitchen is a group of

people who come together to cook healthy meals. Usually these are taken home for their families. Sometimes a meal is shared together. There can be a leader, or leadership can rotate. Recipes are shared. Shopping is done in bulk, allowing for economies of scale. Each meal is priced out and participants pay accordingly.

To Think About: What do you see as some of the advantages of a community kitchen?

Food buying co-operatives

Food buying co-operatives take advantage of economies of scale, as bulk purchases are made, and much of the work is done by volunteers. They involve fresh produce and often provide recipes for products with which you may not be familiar. Prices are reasonable.

To Think About: If someone in your group has been part of a food buying co-operative, ask them to tell you about it. Would your group be interested in hosting such a project for your community?

Income Security Advocacy

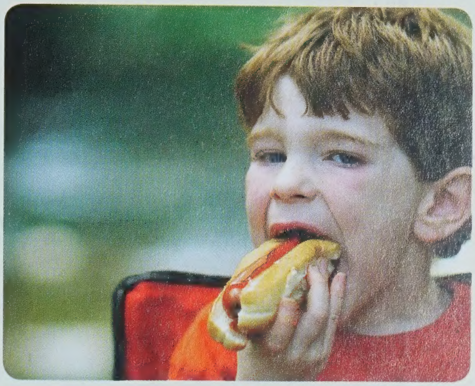
Most professionals in the field of food insecurity agree that sustainable solutions require a commitment to economic and social policy reform, not just to stop-gap measures, such as food banks or targeted, short-term

Closing Reflection

He said, "Feed my sheep."
There were no conditions:
Least of all, Feed my sheep if they deserve it.
Feed my sheep if you feel like it.
Feed my sheep if you have any leftovers.
Feed my sheep if the mood strikes you.
if the economy's OK...
if you're not too busy...
No conditions ... just, "Feed my sheep."

Could it be that God's Kingdom will come when each lamb is fed?

We who have agreed to keep covenant are called to feed sheep even when it means the grazing will be done on our own front lawns.



nutrition support programs. Food Banks Canada advocates for concrete government action "to help Canadians build self sufficiency and well-being, and to significantly reduce the need for food banks." This includes government support for affordable housing and housing subsidies (see our next study in the January-February *Glad Tidings*!), improved Employment Insurance, especially for those in insecure jobs, and a better income support system.[viii] Others advocate for, in addition to the above, protecting and enhancing prescription drug coverage and protecting the affordability of healthy foods, particularly food staples.[ix]

To Think About: What would you feel strongly enough about to write to your federal or provincial government?

For Discussion

Which of the above responses help Canadians build self-sufficiency and well-being? You may have heard the expression "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." Which responses are giving and which are teaching?
Which responses help maintain and/or enhance the dignity of the individual? Which are most empowering?

"What I've seen in Canada is a system that presents barriers for the poor to access nutritious diets and that tolerates increased inequalities between rich and poor, and aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples." Olivier de Schutter states after a visit to Canada.

UN Special Rapporteur on right to food's End-Of-Mission Statement

Children should be allowed to be children.

Additional Activities

Food Bank Meal

This is an exercise you can do if your congregation collects food over time for the food bank, and the receptacle is almost full. Divide up into groups of 3 or 4. Divide up the food in your receptacle amongst the groups. Let each group come up with a meal, using only the food they have from the receptacle. Talk about what the most helpful gifts are that you can give to the food bank. Be sure to replace any food you use.

Youtubeapalooza: Watch on Youtube:

- "Meal Exchange—An Introduction to Food Security" (5 minutes)
- "Hunger and Food Insecurity in Canada" (A project by a university student in 2008, towards completion of a degree, 6 minutes)
- "Household Food Security in Canada" (From CDPAC 2012, Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada, by Valerie Tarasuk, 25 minutes).

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[i] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action, Rome, Italy: FAO, 1996. Available at: www.fao.org

[ii] Tarasuk, V. Health implications of food insecurity. In Social Determinants of Health: Canadian Perspectives, 2nd ed. Raphael, D., Ed.; Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.: Toronto, 2009; Chapter 14.

[iii] Health Canada – Household Food Insecurity in Canada in 2007-2008, Key Statistics & Graphics. www.hc-sc.gc.ca

[iv] Valerie Tarasuk, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, presentation to CPDAC (Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada) 4th Pan-Canadian conference, Ottawa, Feb. 9, 2012.

[v] Ibid

[vi] Nicole Bogart, Global News: Monday, April 09, 2012

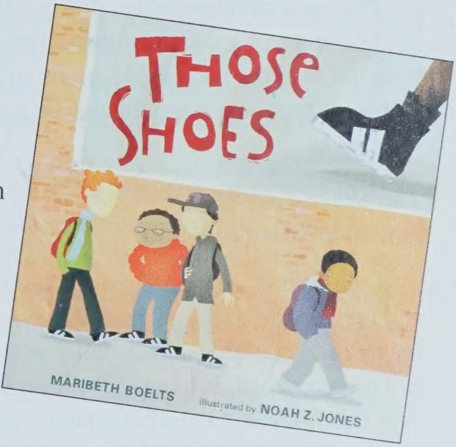
[vii] Food Banks Canada (2011), Hunger Count 2011, Toronto: Food Banks Canada, www.foodbankscanada.ca

[viii] For a complete list see Food Banks Canada (2011), op.cit

[ix] For a complete list see Dr. Lynn McIntyre, Valerie Tarasuk, "Food Security as a Determinant of Health", a presentation to The Social Determinants of Health Across the Life Span Conference, Toronto, November 2002, www.public health.gc.ca

[x] From *Searching for Shalom*. © 1991 Ann Barr Weems. Used by permission of Westminster John Knox Press. www.wjkbooks.com

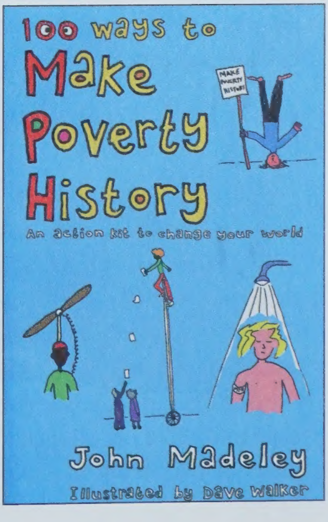
Jesus loves the little children.


THOSE SHOES
MARIBETH BOELTS
illustrated by NOAH Z. JONES

Those Shoes
written by Maribeth Boelts
illustrated by Noah Z. Jones

I love a good children's book, and this is a great one! As a parent, I struggle with wanting my kids to fit in and wanting them to learn that wearing the latest trend is not necessary for happiness. This is the story of a young boy, who wants the shoes that every other boy, but one, in his class has. He finally finds a pair in a thrift shop and buys them, even though they are too small. It is a great story for reminding us all about wants versus needs, and that substance is more important than style. The pictures are also delightful, and show a beautiful multi-cultural group of young people.

This book would be great for children ages 5-10. It could also be a great book for youth or adults to discuss their wants versus needs as we all sometimes feel the need to show our 'success' in clothing, homes, cars, and so many other things.

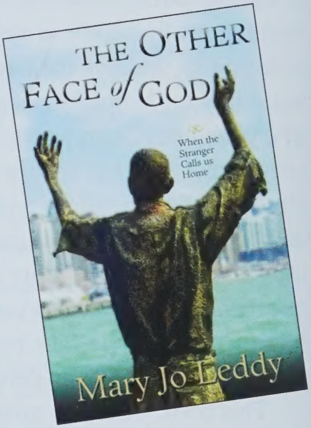

100 ways to
Make
Poverty
History
An action kit to change your world
MAKE POVERTY HISTORY
John Madeley
Illustrated by Dave Walker

100 Ways to Make Poverty History
written by John Madeley
illustrated by Dave Walker

This is a great little book that reminds us of the cost of poverty, and then gets us making positive choices to reduce poverty in the world. It is set out in six sections: persuading those in authority, raising awareness, getting to know more, unleashing your purchasing power, changing the way you live, and risking. Each section has a number of easy, and hard, challenges for reducing poverty. For example, an easy help is to wear a white bracelet and be ready to talk about poverty to those who ask. Some harder challenges are encouraging your church to become a fair trade church, using only fair trade goods at church functions, or to get rid of your car and use public transit, or a bicycle to get around.

The one challenge is that this is a British book, so some of the references are not relevant to Canadian culture. However, this book still has lots of great ideas. It would be great for a WMS group or mission group to use to present ideas to their congregation. It would also be a good gift for the youth and young adults in your midst.

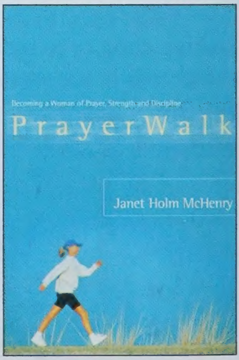
The Other Face of God
written by Mary Jo Leddy



In this book, Mary Jo Leddy shares her work and her life and calls us to see the face of God in the stranger. Leddy is the founder of Romero House in Toronto, which is a home for refugees. Leddy says this book is, "a kind of a poetic reflection on the experience of meeting refugees and the implications of that, spiritually, theologically, and even for how churches understand themselves." (L'Arche Canada) Indeed.

This book is a collection of stories, thoughts and reflections from Leddy. The stories bring us face to face with those that we will likely never encounter—the refugees that come to her door. Leddy introduces them to us in a way where they become real people, living among us—neighbours. I especially appreciate that this has been a journey for her, where she has learned much about her neighbours and has become a more tolerant person.

Prayer Walk: Becoming a Woman of Prayer, Strength, and Discipline
by Janet Holm McHenry



This was an interesting book that suggests combining exercise and prayer into a Prayer Walk. I liked much of this book and thought it would be a good primer for those who are coming from a fairly sedentary lifestyle. She gives a good introduction on the benefits of walking, advice on shoes, and even some stretches to try.

She also gives some good advice on prayer. I especially like her suggestions for praying for certain areas of your town as you pass through it. I often pray when I am alone in my car, and I have often found myself praying for the areas that I pass by. When passing a church, I might pray for the religious life of that congregation or the Christians living in my city. When I pass by a high school, I often pray for young people and the many challenges they face on a daily basis.

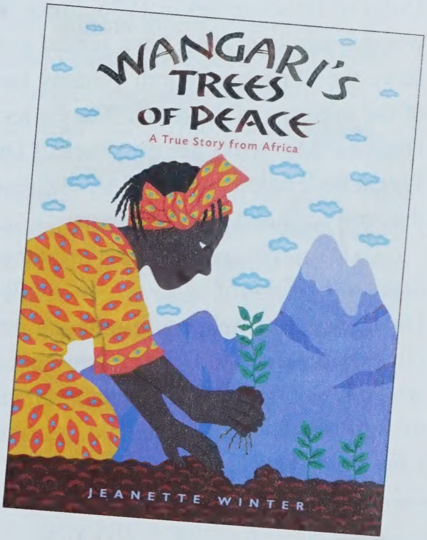
McHenry is also honest that prayer is hard. In some ways, since beginning her prayer walking, she has felt attacked. Also, prayer is emotional. But she endures because she has seen positive changes in her life, and the life of her community.

The one piece of advice that I didn't like was that she felt she needed to find a time when her prayer walking would not affect anyone else. She chose the early morning while all her family were still asleep. She didn't want to take any time away from her children or her spouse. Although noble, I would argue that taking care of yourself, even if it means taking some time away from family, can make you a better mom, spouse, employee, grandparent, and friend. So, you might need to consider beginning your prayer walking at a time when it does require some others to 'pick up the slack'.

Overall, this book has an interesting approach to blending body time and God time with countless benefits for both body and soul.

Wangari's Trees of Peace

written by Jeanette Winter
reviewed by Amy Fonseca



Wangari's Trees of Peace is the true story of Wangari Maathai from Kenya. Wangari was an intelligent young woman, who received a scholarship to study in America. Upon returning to Kenya, she found her country barren and on the verge of becoming a desert due to the excessive deforestation that had occurred there. Wangari wept to see this and began to change things by planting nine trees in her back yard. She then set up nurseries and paid other women to plant and care for trees. Despite opposition, and the belief of government officials that women could not succeed, Wangari's movement produced results, and by 2004 thirty million trees had been planted.

This children's book is evocative and relevant. In an age when we are depleting the earth's resources at an incredible rate, and the norm is to consume and throw away, this book brings a reminder of what will be lost if we continue on this trajectory. This book will lead to great discussion regarding the environment, standing up for what is right, and gender bias.

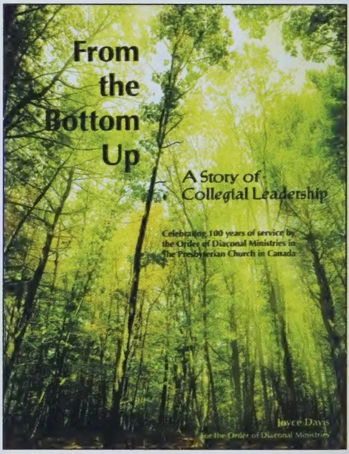
Jeaneatte Winter has done an incredible job writing and illustrating this book. It is definitely a book for the bookshelf.

From the Bottom Up: A Story of Collegial Leadership

written by the Rev. Joyce Davis, for the Order of Diaconal Ministries
reviewed by the Rev. Margaret Robertson

Diakonos, service, has been recognized since the early Christian Church. Phoebe, whom we meet in Romans 16:1, was a deacon of the church at Cenchreae. Then, we don't hear much of this ministry until 1836 in Germany (Theodor Fliedner, Lutheran minister, Kaiserswerth). By the late 1800s, word had spread to North America. Shortly after the missionary societies began educating women for missionary work, there was a call for women to be part of the greater movement. It was then that the General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada approved the Order of Deaconesses in 1908. Since then, women, and later men, have served and do serve the Christian Church in many forms of the ministry of diakonos. The Order of Diaconal Ministries are members of Diakonia, World Federation and DOTAC (Diakonia of the Americas and the Caribbean).

To learn more, read *From the Bottom Up: A Story of Collegial Leadership* by the Rev. Joyce Davis. Joyce's book is a fascinating read. Find out about the variety of ministries and people who have served and do serve in the ministry of Jesus Christ throughout The Presbyterian Church in Canada.


From the Bottom Up
A Story of Collegial Leadership
Celebrating 100 years of service by the Order of Diaconal Ministries in The Presbyterian Church in Canada
Joyce Davis
for the Order of Diaconal Ministries

THE Book Room
WMS PCC

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Soynica Success Story

by Denise VanWissen

On a recent visit to a rural community, we had a meeting with a group of farming families and they asked us about poverty in Canada. That was a difficult question because I am not sure that these people, who live in extreme poverty themselves, could find their idea of poverty in a wealthy, industrialized country like Canada. Yet, there are success stories wherever you are in the world. This is one from Nicaragua.

It is the story of a malnourished boy and illustrates the important work of The Presbyterian Church in Canada's partner organization, SOYNICA, in impoverished areas of Nicaragua.

Santos Gonzalez is a 2-year-old boy, who lives in a village called Loma Alta, or 'High Hill'. He was born at a healthy enough weight, but his mother didn't breastfeed him exclusively because she had to work outside the home, and he was left in the care of his grandma and older siblings. His father keeps busy seasonally, working their small plot of land, growing beans, corn, and sorghum, but the rains are fickle, and usually at least one of the crops fails. Like other families in their region, they migrate for a few months annually to pick coffee for wealthy landowners in the cooler mountain areas. Only the elderly and youngest children are left at home.

Santos is a fairly typical child of the rural areas of Nicaragua. 43% of the population is rural, and 2 out of 3 (68%) of rural Nicaraguans are poor; that is, they struggle to survive on little more than $1 a day.[1] The infant mortality rate is 28, meaning that for every thousand babies born, almost 30 die before their first birthday; the under-five mortality rate is 68 (per 1,000)![2]

Santos became malnourished and his condition left him vulnerable to common, but often serious illnesses like diarrhea and respiratory infections and without timely intervention, he could easily have become an under-five mortality statistic. While the level of malnutrition in Nicaragua is currently cited as 19% (one of the highest levels in Latin America, Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 2010), in the region where Santos and his family live, over half of the children are stunted, or chronically malnourished (indicated by the low height for age). All the children in Santos' community also have parasite infections, another contributing factor for malnutrition.

SOYNICA works with families in Loma Alta and in another 44 communities in rural northern Nicaragua. Nutritionist Karla Sánchez

was present when the community nutrition promoter weighed and measured Santos, and she explained to his mother that he wasn't growing properly, and that his intellectual ability could be affected if his nutritional status wasn't improved as soon as possible. Amalia, Santos' mother, was worried because she hadn't realized that her son was malnourished, and she responded that she was already caring for Santos as best she could, but with five children, and at least one of them sick on any given day, it wasn't easy.

So, Karla showed Amalia how to make a Nicaraguan drink (called pinol) more nutritious by adding soybean flour, and she gave Amalia enough of the ingredients to make this special drink for a month. She also demonstrated how to make a green leaf extract from fresh squash leaves she could gather. This extract is a rich source of the very nutrients Santos was lacking: iron, zinc, and vitamin A.

SOYNICA continued to help this family. The community nutrition promoter, Juanita, who was trained by the SOYNICA team, visited Santos' family regularly to encourage Amalia and to make sure that Santos was drinking the pinol every day.

Santos' mother's efforts have been successful. Apart from now

Overseas Staff Birthdays

September

16 – Denise van Wissen, Nicaragua
27 – Christiana Marie Allison, Cameroon

October

6 – Debra Burns, Malawi
8 – Nelson Zuniga, Nicaragua
11 – Margaret Evans, Kenya
20 – Lezlie Cowley Allison, Cameroon
27 – David Josiah Allison, Cameroon

enjoying more energy for play and learning. Santos has gained weight, and since his malnutrition was caught early (before age three), he might even reach his full potential for height. Amalia has learned from the experience and feels empowered in her challenge to keep her family healthy and happy. She prepares both the special pinol and green leaf extract for all her children now, and she helps Juanita and Karla accompany other mothers of malnourished children in her community.

Denise van Wissen is a nutritionist working as a technical advisor with SOYNICA, one of The Presbyterian Church in Canada's partners in Nicaragua. Denise works at SOYNICA's head office in Managua. Denise and her husband Nelson have two little boys, Jeremy and Diego.

Mission and Partnership at Canada Youth

by Mike Burns

I was 'doubly' blessed by the organizers of Canada Youth 2012 (CY). This year, we finally had enough money in several different budgets to invite youth from the Blantyre Synod in Malawi to attend CY and I was asked to prepare and lead them on this trip. I was also asked to co-lead the Mission Track (MT) at CY with Matt Foxall, the Mission Trip Coordinator for the PCC. After much planning, five Malawian youth, their Synod Youth Director, the Rev. Dennis Mulele, and I, departed for Canada on June 20. In addition to CY, our group visited and was hosted by seven congregations, Camp Kintail, Evangel Hall, and PCC national office.

The CY Mission Track had 38 participants, including the five Malawian youth and six Taiwanese youth. The remaining participants came from across Canada—Newfoundland to British Columbia. We began with an orientation the same afternoon the participants arrived (July 3). We challenged their traditional concept of mission—you must travel to another country to help "poor" people by building something—with information and Bible study. Mission is a mind-set. It is a choice that we make every single day when we rise from our beds. We choose whether to

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[1] http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/web/guest/country/statistics/tags/Nicaragua
[2] http://www.foodsecurityportal.org/nicaragua

participate in God's mission of loving and reconciling the world or not. It is as simple as that, but how we demonstrate that love and reconciliation can be different from one day to the next and from one neighbour to the next.

The next two days were spent working at various programs in the Niagara Region as a way of putting our theology of mission into action. At the end of each day, the group met to debrief and talk about whether the activities were missional or not. On Friday, the group had presentations from Justice Ministries and Presbyterian World Service and Development to further broaden their understanding of mission and learn how the PCC is missional. On Saturday, we went to Crieff Hills, where we learned the value of team work as we carried the very large and very heavy cross a kilometre up a hill. We also worked on three other projects at Crieff. We ended the Mission Track with a final debrief and a challenge to the youth to go back to their congregations and presbyteries and choose to participate in God's mission—in the method and manner needed in their communities.

Canada Youth is the national youth conference of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. It began in 2000 and occurs ever three years. The conference has a Youth Track for young people in high school, a Mission Track for young adults, and a Youth Ministry Training Track for yout leaders. This year the event was held from July 3 to 8 at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario.

Synodical

On March 17, 20 ladies gathered at Camp Kannawin for the Annual Meeting of **Alberta and the North West Synodical.**

The Rev. Helen Smith conducted worship using 2 Corinthians 5:17. Three members from Mill Woods Church, Edmonton, presented on the Women's Gathering. Lisbeth Duncan read the In Memoriam and the poem, I'm Glad I Touched Shoulders With You.

Following a delicious lunch, Anna and David Pandy-Szekeres spoke on their work in Eastern Europe. Helen Smith conducted a Service of Communion and we closed the meeting with an Irish Blessing.

Presbyterial

Westminster Presbyterial Annual Meeting took place on February 16 at St. Aidan's Church, New Westminster, with 32 women in attendance. Two women from the church led devotions using a litany from the Iona Community about the Pilgrim Path—the spiritual life as a journey of repentance, resurrection, and rebirth. It was a very appropriate devotion since 11 people from St. Aidan's are making a physical and spiritual journey to Scotland in May. After committee reports and the Treasurer's report, Betty Sivern led a very moving In Memoriam.

The afternoon speaker was Naomi Krueger, Manager of Deborah's Gate, a project of the Salvation Army in Vancouver. Deborah's Gate provides shelter and help for women, who have been trafficked both domestically and from overseas. Many are First Nations' girls from Northern BC, lured to the city with the promise of jobs. Naomi gave a definition of human trafficking as the exploitation of people for the gain of other people, usually for sex or labour.

Fellowship and laughter over a delicious lunch, prepared by women from St. Aidan's, was, as always, an important part of the gathering.

-Ann Friesen

Over 50 women attended the **Bruce-Grey Presbyterial** Annual at Triverton on April 12. President Elizabeth Wilson, and Tiverton minister, the Rev. Jean Fletcher, warmly welcomed us.

After lunch, Barb Rice spoke about her mission to provide pretty dresses for girls around the world. Barb takes donated T-shirts and other materials, and crafts them into dresses, which are then sent for distribution through people who are visiting the countries in need. She has made over 1000 dresses!

Then David Pandy-Szekeres spoke about his work in Eastern Europe.

Related News

CGIT (Canadian Girls in Training) want your CGIT Memories. CGIT is 100 years young in 2015, and is celebrating the legacy of women, who have been involved in CGIT, and then who went out into the world—women just like you! We want to record some of that legacy for all to read and share in!

Do you want to share your favourite memories with others about your time in CGIT, either as a girl, a leader, or both? We want you to send your story to us as we make a memory book.

For more information, email the Ontario CGIT Association at ontario@cgit.ca.

David believes in living out Matthew 25—feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit those in prison. David began with a brief history of Hungary and how its borders have changed. The Hungarians in the Ukraine have many disadvantages, living as a minority in a foreign country. Working with the Reformed Church of sub-Carpathian Ukraine, David has been involved with establishing secondary schools, farms, and churches. He has also worked with the Roma people providing wells, music lessons, and Bible teaching.

Other highlights of the day included Susan Furlong's devotion on the importance of laughter, and Anne Yee-Hibbs' visual presentation on the Women's Gathering. The afternoon concluded with the Rev. Jan Fletcher conducting communion.

Correction note: The July-August Glad Tidings featured a photograph from this event, but the caption was incorrect. The photograph featured David Pandy-Szekeres, Elizabeth Wilson, and Anne Yee-Hibbs.

Maitland Presbyterial met in Kincardine on May 14 with the theme, Sing with a Joyful Heart. After some delicious desserts, the meeting began with a lively sing-song. The South Kinloss ladies led the worship service, using 2 Corinthians 8:12.

Our guest speaker was Brian Johnston, a teacher, musician, and photographer, who is using his many God-given talents serving in Romania at a Seminary with the Reformed Church in Eastern Europe. Brian is supported by Presbyterian Sharing.

Huron Perth Presbyterial held the Spring Rally at the Burns Presbyterian Church in Milverton on May 28. Mary Duffin opened the program with prayer and the WMS purpose.

In worship, Barbara Taylor and Annis Innes commented on Romans 8:1–6 and the theme Spirit Sightings. Colleen Cronin and Cheryl Legate, our morning speakers, presented information on Victim Services in Perth County.

Reports of the Southwestern Ontario Syndical annual meeting, held in London in April, were given, and Ethel Corry gave a review of the book table. Margaret McGillivray and Winnie Walters gave afternoon devotions on the theme, Take Time to Show Love. Our afternoon speaker, Patricia Day, gave a presentation on planting time.

Roll call asked: Where have you seen God's Spirit at work? We closed with singing, There's a Spirit in the Air and prayer.

Brockville Presbyterial met at St. Paul's Church, Winchester, on March 24 for our Spring meeting. President Catherine Blatch welcomed everyone and led in prayer. Then, the Morewood WMS led a devotion based on the beatitude, Blessed are the Persecuted.

Our speaker, Catherine Blatch, gave insight into the work that Action Réfugiés Montréal (ARM) is doing to provide emotional and monetary support for refugees detained at the Immigration Holding Centre in Laval, Quebec. Upcoming laws, if passed, may actually lengthen the time refugees will be detained at the Centre, making their work even more important. We were encouraged to show our concern for the persecuted through prayers and actions. A special thanks was also expressed for the work of the Rev. Glynis Williams, Executive Director of ARM.

Brockville Presbyterial met again at St. Paul's Church, Winchester, on May 23. President Catherine Blatch welcomed visitors from Lanark-Renfrew Presbyterial, along with other members and visitors, and opened in prayer. The Rev. Samer Kandalaft welcomed everyone to the

Knox Crescent Kensington and First Presbyterian WMS, Montreal, met on May 23 to honour their associate members and thank them for their support. During the meeting, President Grace Thornley-Brown presented a Life Membership pin to Helen Dearlove, in appreciation for her work as Treasurer of the group.

newly-renovated, handicap-accessible church.

The Brockville group led worship based on, The Beatitudes. They stressed that the Kingdom of God comes when we commit to Christ, accept and do the will of God, and walk with the Holy Spirit in our personal and spiritual life. This was followed by a missionary skit.

Before lunch, everyone was invited to visit mission booths on Lebanon, Malawi, Taiwan, Indonesia, and the Cariboo. After lunch, Janet Jones and Catherine Blatch gave glowing reports from the Council meeting at Crieff Hills and Synodical.

Catherine Blatch introduced Druse Bryan, past-President of the national WMS. Mary Moorehead, another past-President, interviewed Druse about her position, responsibilities, and impression of mission. As President, Druse visited India, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Taiwan, and Eastern Europe. She was honoured at representing the WMS around the world, and treasured meeting so many dedicated Christians around the world.

Montreal Presbyterial met at the Ghanaian Presbyterian Church, St-Laurent, Quebec, on March 14. The Rev. Dowah Ablorh led the devotions using Psalm 51, and the David and Bathsheba story.

Each year, our Treasurer, Ruth-Ann Williams, asks our groups to try to contribute a little more than last year. She was pleased when Grace Thornley-Brown, Expense Secretary, stated that a $500 surplus was sent to the WMS in Toronto. Once the reports were read, we participated in some simple exercises. We love to get up and stretch for ten minutes. After a feast prepared by the Ghanaians, the ladies sang a lively hymn with lots of hand-clapping.

Our guest speaker, the Rev. Kandaloft from St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Kemptville, spoke on, Is the Arab Spring Good News for Christians in the Middle East? He lived in Syria and gave an interesting account of what is going on there. We are subject to so much in the news and it may not be totally reliable, so it was invaluable to have first-hand information on what is currently happening. The Rev. Kandaloft also spoke of the difficulties that Christians face in these times.

In the Fall, we are going to Livingstone Church—another first-time visit. The Livingstone ladies plan to have a WMS group. Now that's exciting.

-Genevieve Holding

Local

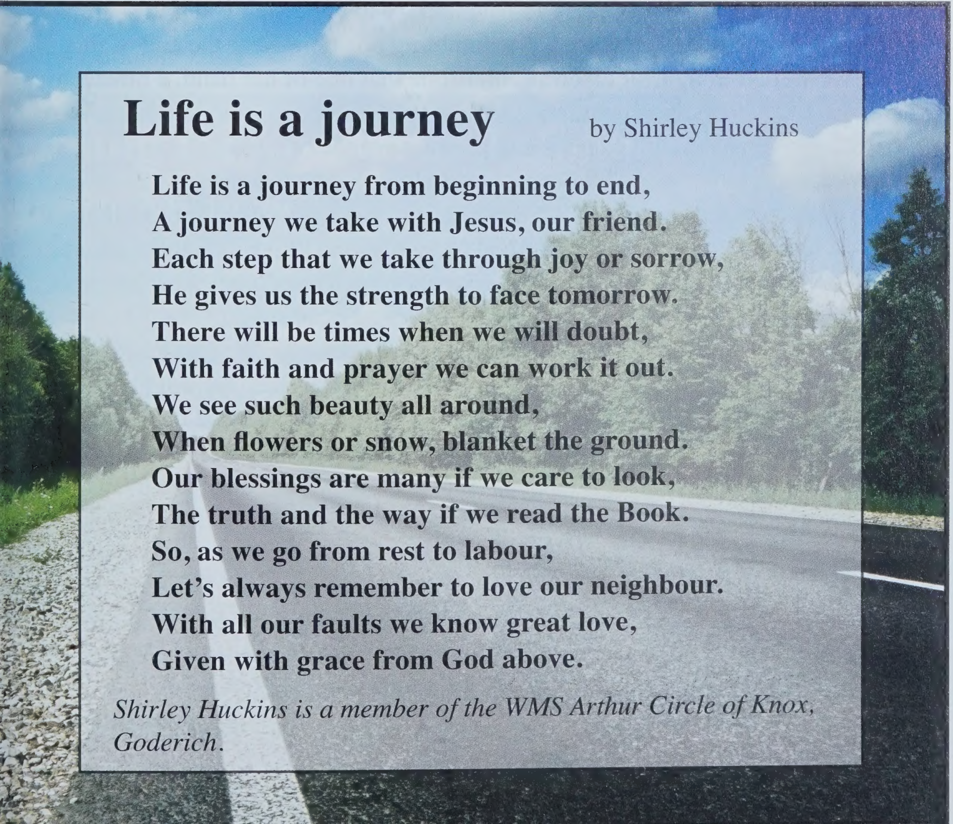
A very extraordinary friend of mine, Muriel Judd Brown, just celebrated her 100th birthday. Although we both grew up in Glenview Presbyterian Church in Toronto and we shared so many things in common, we didn't 'meet'

Muriel 100th
May 25, 2012

Photo: Keith Pittock

until 2002. We met with married names so our common ground took a while to unravel and in the end it was revealed that I had been part of the choir that sang at her wedding! The reason we had not met earlier was explained by the difference in our ages, yet a very lovely friendship has developed. Many friends from **Paulin Presbyterian** Church, where she was an active member for so many years, came to share best wishes and of course, enjoy cake. She is a lady of great faith, who has helped to spread the Gospel throughout the world.

-Norma (Grant) Panton



Life is a journey

by Shirley Huckins

Life is a journey from beginning to end,
A journey we take with Jesus, our friend.
Each step that we take through joy or sorrow,
He gives us the strength to face tomorrow.
There will be times when we will doubt,
With faith and prayer we can work it out.
We see such beauty all around,
When flowers or snow, blanket the ground.
Our blessings are many if we care to look,
The truth and the way if we read the Book.
So, as we go from rest to labour,
Let's always remember to love our neighbour.
With all our faults we know great love,
Given with grace from God above.

Shirley Huckins is a member of the WMS Arthur Circle of Knox, Goderich.

Forward in Faith

I had the privilege of attending the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Saskatchewan event in June on behalf of the WMS along with Sarah Kim and Joan Smith. It was a very moving and emotional affair, where survivors of the residential school system told their stories through tears that were hard to stop at times. The audience wept along with the presenters, taking tissues offered from attendants who then collected the "tissues of tears" to be given as an offering to the Sacred Fire.

On the Saturday of the event, we gathered for lunch at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Saskatoon, for fellowship with other Presbyterians—native and non-native—and to continue to share in a more personal and intimate setting. The lunch, sponsored by the WMS, was delicious and the sharing was powerful. Here we heard about the Birtle and Cecelia Jefferies schools—the Presbyterian schools.

As representatives of the WMS and the Church, we did our best to stand with our brothers and sisters in Christ; to listen, to try to understand, and to share their stories by telling others. It was a very humbling position. Near the end of this time, we were told by Chief Norma Johnstone that one of her band, a nineteen-year-old girl who had just graduated high school a year ago, had lost her life—another young person full of hope and promise—gone.

What can each of us do? We can support the new Together We Can! project that was approved at our May Council Meeting. It is a Canadian project that will provide financial support to the Cariboo Ministries in British Columbia and the Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry in Saskatchewan. Your donation will fund programs for First Nations children and adults who need support. Donations can be made at any time—just mark your donation for this project.

Setting up the Sacred Fire.

The second Together We Can! project is an international one—Maternal and Child Health Care in Malawi. This, too, is an important project. Details of both these projects will be on our website shortly and full details will be mailed to groups in the late Summer.

Your donations to general offerings and these important special projects are gratefully received.

Janet Brewer

Circulation News

By the time you read this, I will have begun my retirement after 40 years of working with the Women's Missionary Society. I want to express how much I have appreciated working, meeting, and being in touch with so many dedicated people across the country.

I am sure that you will give Alana Martin, who will be serving as our new Administrative Assistant, the same kind of support that you gave me. She has spent the Summer months learning the work and will very efficiently be able to answer any of your questions regarding your subscription to *Glad Tidings.*

As always, the Fall is renewal time! During the next couple of months, please provide your *Glad Tidings* Secretaries/contact people with your renewal payment of $13.50 plus applicable taxes (ON, NL, NB $15.25; BC $15.12; NS $15.53; AB, SK, MB, QC, PEI $14.18). The deadline for returning the list of subscribers is November 1, so you should have your payment in to them well before this date. (However, remember that people can subscribe at any time.) Remember that the magazine is also available in three formats: regular, large print, and audio CD.

Katherine Allen

Working for women and children in Malawi

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Announcements

Congratulations to Katherine Allen!

We wish Katherine Allen, WMS Administrative Assistant and Circulation Manager, all the best as she begins her early retirement this month!

Katherine has worked with the Women's Missionary Society since July 18, 1972, in various capacities. She started out as a secretary to the Executive Secretary. It was in 1986 that she began her work with *Glad Tidings*. She assisted the Editor of *Glad Tidings* with the magazine, and began her work as Circulation Manager, which includes overseeing the subscriptions for the magazine.

In 1996, her job description changed again to include general office work, along with her work as *Glad Tiding* Circulation Manager. In February 2003, the Council Executive changed her title from Office Secretary to Administrative Assistant/ Circulation Manager, which better reflected the work Katherine was doing.

Many of you will know that Katherine grew up in the town of Stayner, Ontario, with three older brothers. It was during her last few years of CGIT (Canadian Girls in Training) that she was inspired to work for the church by Lois Powrie, who was doing workshops in the area, and by her minister.

Outside of work, Katherine has many friends and varied interests. She sings in the Ontario Presbyterian Chorus, is a member of the Business and Professional Women's Club, has completed a Christian Faith and Life Certificate from the Ewart Centre for Lay Education, is an ordained elder of the PCC, and a member of East Toronto Presbyterial.

Katherine's vast knowledge of the WMS and her presence and conversations at WMS Council meetings, along with her great laugh, will be missed. We wish her many happy years of socializing, travelling, and enjoying life with friends and family.

God's blessing on you Katherine as you begin
this exciting new phase in your life!

Remembering

Elsie Louisa Douglas
Kenyon Presbyterian
Dunvegan ON

Marjorie Scott
Strathcona Presbyerian
Edmonton AB

Alma Adams
Bessie MacMurchy WMS
Listowel ON

Cecelia Aitcheson
Iyla Elliott
Lucknow WMS
Lucknow ON

Ethel "Dimples" Houston
St. Andrew's Church
Orillia ON

Phyllis Campbell
Dorothy Campbell
Osgoode Presbyterian
Vernon ON

Jean Gallie
Elizabeth Radford
Laura K Pelton WMS,
St.Andrew's
Windsor ON

We welcome Alana Martin!

We welcome Alana Martin as our new Administrative Assistant for the Women's Missionary Society. Alana will also be your new contact person for *Glad Tidings* subscriptions.

Alana is no stranger to the WMS having worked in The Book Room as our Resource Consultant. Alana's enthusiasm for books was evident, especially when new orders would arrive! Alana also developed the website for The Book Room, making The Book Room more accessible to everyone, not just those within the GTA.

As Alana begins her new position, she is excited about learning and experiencing so many new things. Through her work at The Book Room she got a glimpse into the work of the WMS, but she is excited to now, 'be in the thick of things.' Anyone who knows Alana knows that she brings great energy and enthusiasm to all that she does.

When not at work, Alana loves to read. She also enjoys making crafts and playing soccer with her 3-year-old daughter, Amayah. Alana says she is 'obsessed' with nail polish and nail art. She is married to Kazz and she has recently been taking course in Accounting and Business Communications at Centennial College.

Whoever said, "You can't have your cake and eat it too," never heard of Gift Annuitie

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What flavour of ministry would you like to support?

A real life example:

In 1994, Giollo Kelly acquired a $10,000 gift annuity which she designated for the Presbyterian Church Building Corporation. When she died fifteen years later, Giollo had received nearly $11,000 (87% tax-free) in total payments and left a legacy of nearly $7,500 with the money remaining in her annuity account.

(The above example is for illustrative purposes only. Annuity rates and the residue available for disbursement vary.)

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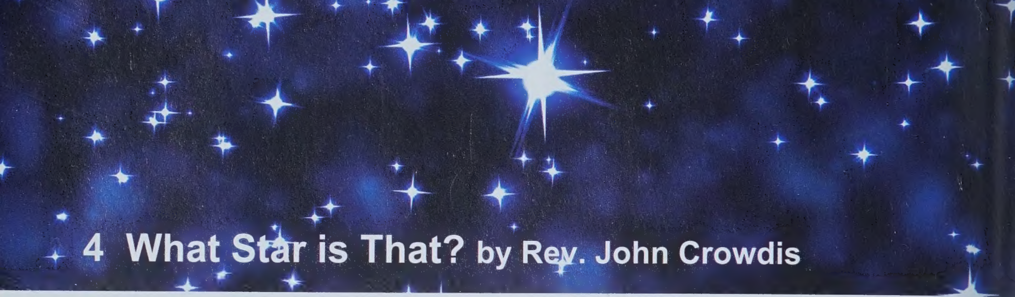
Glad Tidings

November/December 2012



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Glad Tidings

November/December 2012
Volume 88, No. 6

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CIRCULATION: Alana Martin

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Editorial

When I worked at Gracefield Camp and Conference Centre as a young adult, I loved the night sky. The camp is about an hour north of Ottawa, within the Synod of Quebec and Eastern Ontario, and is remote enough to be away from significant light pollution. So, the skies were filled with masses of stars. Looking out over the lake at God's amazing light display, God was with me. It was a time of transition for me and I really needed that presence. Having grown up in the church, I had taken some time away from organized religion to live the life of a student. Now I was back—committed to my faith, making it my own, and learning how to live a life of discipleship as a young adult. It was during some of those star-filled nights, in prayer and silence, that God's presence assured me that I was not alone.

This is the same presence that the Rev. John Crowdis also experiences when he gazes into the night sky. You will read about how, having lost his infant daughter, his love of astronomy brings him God's comforting presence. The stars remind him that even within this vast universe, we matter to God.

It is those same stars, one in particular that caused the Wise Men to begin their journey to God's presence. This month, June Stevenson reminds us that their journey, like any road trip, was difficult, but they went, expecting to find a king. They did find what they were looking for. They found God—Jesus—the King of kings.

We are also reminded this month, that God's presence is for each and everyone one of us. Linda Shaw's article in this edition of *Glad Tidings*, speaks of an amazing group of people that she ministers with. Thanks to three churches, these adults, with developmental disabilities, have a place where they can feel God's presences and share it with one another.

As you approach the Christmas Season, take time to feel God's presence. Take a moment to look up into the night sky for just a moment. Know that the God that created the stars in the sky is the God that is present in your life. Know that the God of this vast universe came to each of us in the Christ child. Know that we too can follow the star and arrive at the stable. God is for each and everyone one of us. Merry Christmas.

What Sta

“Daddy, what star is that?”

I remember that question as clear as a bell late in September 2010. My older daughter, Megan, looked straight up in the early evening, having stayed up past her bedtime. I was embarrassed that I didn’t know. I had taken a course in Astrophysics during my undergraduate degree, which I greatly enjoyed, but I had forgotten my summer sky. Fortunately, thanks to a handy iPhone app, a few minutes later, I was able to tell her that the name of that star was “Vega”—one of the brighter stars in our sky. It began a process where I would reclaim my love for amateur astronomy, to bring my daughter into it, but also to help our family walk through the darkest period of our lives.

You see, at the time, my wife and I were expecting our second child, due in the early days of December, just before Christmas. In fact, the baby’s due date was Megan’s birthday! We were so looking forward to this newest addition to our family, and stargazing at the time was a way to make sure that Megan wasn’t left out when baby arrived. Four days before Megan’s birthday, we welcomed our second daughter, Heather Grace, into our lives … and everything was perfect for a moment. It was a perfect metaphor for the anticipation of Advent, and hopes realized.

But then that moment collapsed.

is That?

by Rev. John Crowdis

Two days after Heather was born, she died unexpectedly for reasons still unknown. Our world fell apart two days before our older daughter's birthday, and scant weeks before Christmas. The hope and expectancy that Advent had been such a powerful metaphor for, was smashed as we had to bury our second child ten days before Christmas.

For the most part, we received love, care, and support from those around us. We were also fortunate enough at Heather's funeral to have someone with the wisdom and forethought to remind people that there are no words that can ever make the death of our child okay. People may mean well, but often shallow, pithy statements like "It's God's will" or "God has a plan" can do far more harm than good. Such platitudes, I have found, are to alleviate one's own discomfort with such an awful event, rather than to truly walk with someone in their grief. I have also personally learned that even though I have had to bury my own daughter, I still cannot imagine what it is like for someone else to lose a child … because I am not them, and my circumstances, no matter how similar, will still not be exactly the same as those whose own children have died.

But in the midst of this, we had to find ways to journey through our grief, and then to realize that that grief isn't so much a journey, but a constant companion. It is always there …

because there is never a point in our lives when we will not miss having Heather in our midst. It is never about "getting over it" or even "getting through it," but reconciling this as part of our lives.

In the immediate aftermath of Heather's death, we learned of a program where we could have a star named in her memory. It seemed appropriate, given what we had been planning with our older daughter as we were expecting Heather. We asked for a star in the constellation of Cassiopeia. It meant that at least in Canada, we could try to find her star no matter what time of year it was, as this constellation never sets in latitudes north of about 30 degrees. The trouble was, although not unexpectedly, that the chosen star would be so faint that it is simply not visible to the naked eye … and, in fact, we would need a telescope with an aperture of 8" or more in order to gather enough light to see it. As it happened, our life insurance paid for a computer-controlled telescope that was big enough.

No life, no matter how long or how short, is insignificant in the universe. We matter to God. Period.

For me, astronomy has become a means of both journeying with my grief and personal devotion. I found and experienced God walking with me in the midst of it. On the occasions where the nights have been dark enough, and the air still enough, I have caught glimpses of a faint glimmer of light in the darkness. Light from Heather's star has touched my eye, and I have felt the comforting presence of God. At the same time, I have also been able to look at the heavens, gaze into the mind-numbing vastness of the universe, and realize that what we are seeing is a snapshot of something that is tumultuous and in a constant state of change. Yet our own lives are so short, that this wonderfully dynamic universe appears static and unchanging. Yet no matter how vast this universe truly is, and how irrelevant we might feel, it is important that we are here to witness and appreciate it. No life, no matter how long or how short, is insignificant in the universe. We matter to God. Period.

Stars are an important symbol of Christmas. Light in the darkness, the Star of Bethlehem, we know those symbols, and there are reasons why they work for us. Even the three stars that form the belt of the constellation of Orion have been called the "three wise men" in the past, as they are visible in the winter sky. The Star of Bethlehem, whether a true

Blessed Are Those That Mourn ...

by Colleen Wood

Christmas isn't a happy time for everyone. Many of our churches now have Longest Night (or Blue Christmas) services on December 21. December 21 is chosen because it is the longest night of the year and for some, night is a time of heightened loneliness, remembering, or fear. We can all reach out to someone who is mourning.

This year, on December 21, set aside some extra time to pray. Pray for those who have lost loved ones over the past year. Pray for those who are lonely. Pray for those who are unemployed. Pray for those with sad anniversaries or memories of Christmas. Also, take some time to connect with those that you are praying for. Call them up, send a card, or connect through an email.

Consider attending a Longest Night Service. Participate in the service, provide food or beverages, or just worship with those who mourn.

Finally, consider inviting someone who is lonely to participate in your Christmas celebrations—a student who is away from family, an adult who has lost a spouse, someone who is ill and unable to prepare their dinner.

We can't take away the pain, but we can walk with those who mourn, and perhaps bring a little of God's joy to them this Christmas.

For They Shall Be Comforted

astronomical event or not, embodied so much hope that it continues as a powerful metaphor today. It is this light in the darkness motif that helps me to walk with grief as a companion, but also to feel a connection to God as a bereaved parent. It is in this image that I find a sparkle of hope and strength, and it is an image I am reminded of every time I see the stars at night, or when my older daughter asks me, "Daddy, what star is that?"

The Rev. John Crowdis is a minister in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Most recently, John served with Clarkson Road Presbyterian Church, in Mississauga. In January of 2012, John moved with his family to Calgary where his wife now serves as minister at Symons Valley United Church.

Home by Another Way

by L. June Stevenson

Imagine: three VIPs academics, kings, learned men, scientifically trained astrologers. We know little about them. Did they live near each other? Had they ever met before? Scripture says that, individually or together, they saw a star rising on the horizon. With their collective knowledge, wisdom, and experience, they knew that this particular star heralded a huge and significant event. These men, obviously knowledgeable about scripture, were influenced perhaps by Balaam's prophecy in Numbers 24:17, "a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall arise out of Israel." They likely took this to mean that the star was the birth of a king, and that this new-born king was of God. The event was so special that they began to plan a trip so that they might follow firsthand the journey of this miraculous star and be part of its *raison d'être*.

Though they have been called Magi by some, part of a sacred caste of the Medes, most biblical scholars believe they could have been members of a priestly caste of Zoroaster, forbidden to do magic, but skilled in interpreting dreams.[1] Their exact number is unknown, but three is generally associated with the number of gifts that were brought. They are most commonly known by the names Gaspar, Melchoir, and Balthasar, but other names have been attributed to them as well. These particular kings were likely from Persia, which is east of Bethlehem and a long way from Jerusalem.

Taking an extended trip requires a great deal of planning. When our children were very young and we lived north of Cochrane, Ontario, just south of Moosonee, going home to visit parents and friends each summer was a huge endeavour. There were diapers, toys, and books to pack, plus all of our everyday needs. Then, when we began taking a cottage with friends for two weeks during the summer, all that paraphernalia including linens, fishing gear, canoe, you name it, was hanging out of the back of our car. Did I mention we had a 70-pound lab-shepherd cross to fit in somewhere, as well? Nothing compared to a grumpy camel, of course, but still a challenge.

The kings travelled long and far. The distance, as the crow flies, would be something like 1000–1200 miles (about the same as our summer sojourn). There were no Tim Hortons, no lay-bys or service centres along the way. There were no maps; perhaps a few markers here and there that someone had set up to guide travellers—little but sun, sand, wind storms, and stars in the night. But these men were intelligent and focused.

According to the account in Matthew, they finally reached the place where the new king was. As our GPS says, "You have arrived." And so they stopped, entered, and paid homage. We do not know where this happened or how old Jesus was. It is commonly thought he would have been about two years by the time of their arrival and the Holy family would have moved from Bethlehem. Imagine how that incredible sight must have caused a stir in the neighbourhood: three majestic figures on large camels, to say nothing of the entourage that accompanied them.

The account of a star cannot be explained by any logical theory. Stars do not 'move' ahead of people and then stop. Was that heavenly body even a star, or was it a comet or planet? Too many questions lie unanswered for some to consider this account authentic. Historians say that there was much unrest in the

.. and they went home by another way.

Matthew 2:1-12

Roman Empire at that time, and an expectation of a Golden Age and a great deliverer. Was the Star like the miraculous pillar of fire which stood in the camp by night during Israel's Exodus, or the "brightness of God," which shone around the shepherds on that night of nights?

The Wise men truly believed that the king who was destined to come had arrived.

They had fulfilled their goal. They witnessed a new born babe whom the stars predicted would one day be their king. Kneeling humbly before their future king, they brought out their expensive gifts and presented them to Mary and Joseph—costly gifts that must have assisted the Holy family greatly during the next few years of their flight into Egypt: frankincense, gold, and myrrh. It is interesting to note that these great men were not Jews, but Gentiles, thus fulfilling the prophecy that kings would bring him gifts. Their journey back home would not be so easy. King Herod, disturbed by the thought that one supposedly greater than he had been born, angrily determined to kill all the young children in the area. Warned in a dream by an angel, the wise men returned home by another way.

Now that would present problems for me. This summer, 2012, we rented a cottage in Bouctouche, New Brunswick. Returning to the cottage on our second day there, having visited nearby Shediac, we were stopped by a hydro worker and told we would have to go another way to reach the town. There were hydro lines down and it was dangerous. I said, "We don't know any other way; it's our first time here." Fortunately for us, we just had to go to the next exit off the freeway.

For the wise men, it was much different. They had already travelled for many months, perhaps up to one year, and now they had to find another way home. The possibilities were limited. Unlike our modern system of roads, for them there were few alternatives. Astoundingly, it didn't matter. This was the greatest effort of their lifetime: to witness the rising of a star and the birth of a king, who came once and for all time, and to pay him homage.

There is more than one lesson here for us today. Although Jesus was born a Jew, he came for all humankind. In fact, he was rejected by his own people and his coming was celebrated by Gentiles (at least people of another faith tradition) of whom it is said returned home to later be baptized by St. Thomas and helped to spread the Christian gospel. Whatever the truth surrounding this story may be, the story has an honoured place in Christmas tradition. It enforces our belief that God indeed does move in mysterious ways and that we journey faithfully towards understanding and truth.

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[1] The author acknowledges that some of the factual information came from an article on http://wwww.newadvent.org/cathen/09527a.htm

What is that in your hand?

by Linda Shaw

"What is that in your hand?"(Exodus 4:2) Moses thought it was nothing, just an old staff, but it turned out to be a conduit for the power of God that enabled Moses to minister effectively for decades.

Often preachers use this story to challenge us to re-imagine our ordinariness as gifts God can turn into powerful instruments of ministry. Sometimes, I think it isn't so much the gifts as the situations that are the power of God lying dormant in our hands. Here's an example of what I mean.

Twenty-three years ago, Cheryl, a young woman with a developmental disability, walked into Westwood Presbyterian Church in Winnipeg and changed the life and witness of that congregation, as well as mine personally. The congregation was friendly and welcoming and we always served cookies with the coffee. Cheryl enjoyed our coffee time. A couple of weeks later, Cheryl began bringing other people from the group home where she lived, and we welcomed them, too. Two families, who had been attending Westwood, brought their adult children out of the woodwork. We couldn't ignore Cheryl and her friends and we suspected they needed more than hymns from the 1972 hymn book or my husband's eloquent and scholarly sermons!

We began a mid-week fellowship group for adults with a cognitive disability. I coordinated the group, but I had no trouble finding people to step forward and work with me. Many who came forward were not key leaders in the church and had never considered taking a leadership role, but God called them (What is that in your hand?) and they responded. Within a year, we grew to a group of 25-30 and we connected with other similar groups in the city. I had the privilege of coordinating this ministry, Rainbow Walk, for 15 years before I went to Guyana. When I left, others stepped forward and took responsibility for the group. The group continues to meet and on any given Sunday there are 8-10 adults with a disability worshipping God at Westwood. Several are full members of the congregation and one man, Bob, wears a choir gown and helps the choir lead the praise. All of this is a visible sign of God's amazing love and the amazing variety of people God created to honour and serve Him.

I returned to Canada and moved to Simcoe, Ontario, in the spring of 2009. I arrived just in time to attend a meeting of three churches looking to explore the possibility of re-starting a "Friendship" group in Simcoe. It seemed as if God was saying, "Linda, look at what is in your hand?" I was called back into a ministry that I loved and I enthusiastically agreed to be the coordinator. We began that Fall with great leadership and support from St. Paul's Presbyterian, Trinity Anglican, and Immanuel Christian Reformed Church. Some of the leaders had experience coming alongside adults with intellectual disabilities, but mostly they were just God's quiet, faithful servants, who recognized the opportunity God placed in their hand.

So what do we do together? Well, pretty much we are a mid-week church. We sing, we reflect on a Bible story, we break into small groups for more conversation and a craft or activity, we pray together, we share refreshments, we love one another. It's church at its best, with everyone sharing their gifts and caring for one other. Some enjoy leading the singing, some like to play instruments, some like to read scripture, some like to have a dramatic role, some like to pray out loud, and everyone enjoys praising God with their whole being. If the Spirit says sing, we sing. If the Spirit says dance, we dance. God's people serve one another and the community, so we visit shut-ins and have one or two mission projects each year.

In Simcoe, we meet at St. Paul's Presbyterian because it is central and handicap-accessible, but we are interdenominational and have wonderful and faithful leaders from all three congregations. Two of the ministers from the supporting churches are able to attend regularly, to be personally refreshed and to serve the refreshments. We visit each of the congregations once a year to participate and lead in worship. At Christmas, we present a traditional pageant (well, traditional might be stretching it a bit) and invite the whole community. Last year, David, a 47-year-old man with Down's Syndrome, played the role of Joseph and escorted Vicki, who is blind, down the aisle as his wife, Mary. In the early part of

It's church at its best, with everyone sharing their gifts and caring for one other.

this year, David passed away and the whole group supported his family at his funeral. We meet each other for coffee and invite one another into our homes for meals and birthday parties. We visit the members of our group who are wheelchair bound and can't get out as easily as the rest of us. We even go to conferences once or twice a year. We are the body of Christ.

We are all called to have eyes to see the needs in our community and to consider what we are holding in our hands.

Not every church needs a "Friendship in Faith" group, but be ready if "Cheryl" walks in the door on Sunday morning, or group homes start popping up in your community, and no other church has a similar ministry. We are all called to have eyes to see the needs in our community and to consider what we are holding in our hands. If you are feeling called to consider starting a group for adults with a developmental disability, there is support for you. The Christian Reformed Church in North America has been promoting "Friendship" ministries, with resources, for many years. I use the gifts of storytelling that I have developed as a "Children and Worship" leader and trainer for The Presbyterian Church in Canada. You may have people in your congregation with similar storytelling gifts. You certainly have people who can assist with the singing, crafts, and visiting. I guarantee that if you start a group and commit yourself to loving the people who come, you will not only be a blessing, but you too will be blessed. Everything you do will be appreciated whole-heartedly and you will receive compliments, loyal friends, and hugs! No complaints come from this group! God will take what's in your hand and turn it into a powerful ministry for the individuals directly involved, and an enriching experience for the whole congregation.

Linda Shaw is presently the Young Children and Worship Coordinator for The Presbyterian Church in Canada. She also teaches part-time at Fanshawe College in Simcoe in the Adult Upgrading Department. If you would like to learn more about this ministry, or share your own experience, Linda would like to hear from you. Her email is ianandlindashaw@gmail.com.

Marble and Gold

Marble and gold mark the spot
where it is said Mary gave birth
Not far down the road
a rocky hill.
The burden is light
and the yoke easy
but narrow the way
and few are chosen.
Down the road
to a hill
and a cross
to eternal life.

The gold is burnished and the marble veined
at the site where Jesus was born.
The burden is light and the yolk is easy
But few are chosen for the narrow way.
Down the road and up the hill
to a cross
and a life
eternal.

L. June Stevenson

What Can I Give?

Giving things—Giving time—Giving prayer

By Shaunna MacQuarrie

Christmas can be a crazy time of year for any family. For my family, a family in ministry, at times I think we feel this even more than others. Advent often has us scrambling to meet social commitments inside and outside of church amidst one of the busiest times of the year for both school and church. I find 'parenting effectively' during the holidays especially difficult because routines are often upset with the extra gatherings, travel, and late nights.

Then throw in the wrench of how commercialized Christmas has become and I face a parenting mountain to climb that parallels the likes of Everest. The end of a day of Christmastime parenting often ends with a head-smash and a sigh as I fall exhausted into bed wishing for the 'easier' days of say ... February (of course, when I say February, I mean 'pre-Shrove Tuesday' February. Don't even get me started on Lent!)

I spend a lot of time reading about how to be better at my #1 job as 'Mom' and over the years I have found a few ways to bring the real meaning of

Christmas back into our home. We spend so much time getting to Christmas that, with the little extra time I do manage to find, I try hard to focus on the joy of giving to others in three ways: *Giving things—Giving time—Giving prayer.*

Giving Things

A simple, yet important, teachable moment can be found when you have that conversation with your child, niece, nephew, or grandchild about how there are those less fortunate than us. This is true no matter where on the number-line your bank account balance sits. There are always ways to give to others. If your kids happen to be like mine, they have WAY more than they actually need—especially when it comes to toys. My husband and I find ourselves baffled by the sea of toys we are constantly swimming in. How did it ever get so bad?! We only have two kids and yet we have enough toys in our home that I am sure we could open a toy store!

So at Christmas we include a special part to our giving strategy, one that also has the benefit of making room for the Christmas influx. So, we make a deal with Santa that on Christmas Eve, our kids place out any toys they have outgrown or don't play with anymore that are in great condition. Santa then takes those toys to a local community organization that provides gently used toys to families, and Santa leaves your child their new toy in its place. Realistically, he's going to leave at least a few toys for your kids anyway, so this is a great way to teach your child about the joy of giving and knowing that the toy they 'outgrew' is being loved and played with by another little boy or girl rather than sitting around collecting dust. It is about giving your child a sense of responsibility about using and respecting the things they have, and helping them develop a sense of the difference between necessity and desire.

Giving Time

Giving time is a fantastic learning experience, and ways to contribute of your time positively during the Advent season are abundant—there is no shortage of ways to help out. In fact, many organizations are often in dire need of volunteers to help out. Research your local community and find out what businesses, groups, and charitable foundations are around (walking distance is great—the easier the access, the more likely it is that you'll be able to help out more than once and perhaps beyond the Christmas season).

This way of giving can be done daily, weekly, or even once per season depending on how big the way you choose to give is. I've heard of families doing small things within their community or church family. Look for ways your family can give of themselves and their time to help increase someone else's joy during the days and weeks leading up to Christmas. Our 'Advent calendar' last year was filled with 'ways to give' and each day our then three-year-old had to pick one way to help someone else—simple things like 'give Mommy a kiss or Daddy a hug' were on the list. These were simple things that a three-year-old could handle, but things that also taught her about the joy of bringing happiness to someone else by giving of her time and energy. Even young children can make a card or help to bake goodies for a friend, teacher, or elderly member of your church, or shovel a driveway with you. As our kids grow, we're looking forward to the day we can go out as a family and make a difference together!

Giving Your Prayer

Teaching a young child to pray can be as fun as it is important. For over

a year, our daughter's dinner grace was "Dear God for food. In Jesus' name, Amen." We tried and tried to get her to remember the 'thank you' part, but it just did not seem to stick. This resulted in a ton of laughs from friends and family and no doubt, from God Himself. Oh, the innocence of a child's prayer. Our daughter talks to God on a regular basis. Just the other night, I caught her asking God if Jesus really loved her. Then, in a small voice, I heard her say, "I sure hope so. Because I sure love Him." The buds of a growing relationship with her Creator!

Christmas cards are a wonderful way to offer blessings for the year ahead, but once Christmas (and then New Year's and then ... Valentine's Day ...) is behind us, I wonder what to do with them. Ask anyone that knows me, our Christmas card display is often still up several weeks after Christmas! I always feel awful tossing the cards that were often so beautifully written or decorated into the trash. I keep the yearly photos for our bulletin board, but I always feel so guilty when it is time to clear out last year's cards. I've even kept cards from major occasions like our wedding, first birthdays, and first Christmas, but the year-to-year ones I just don't have the space for.

So my solution is to combine the Christmas cards with prayer! Put the cards in a big basket in your dining room and every night you sit down to dinner with your family, before grace is spoken, read through one Christmas card again. Talk about the family or person who sent it. Add a prayer for that person or family to your dinner prayer. This is not only a way to honour that person, their family, and their original wishes for your family, it's also a way to really take your time with each Christmas card (not so easy to do when they are arriving in the mail by handfuls) and take a moment to be truly grateful for that friend or family. We often forget that the very best thing we can do for one another is pray and, at this time of year, amidst the hustle and bustle, it's even easier to forget.

What I love most about all of this, is that it forces our entire family to slow down a bit. It's so easy to wish with all our might that Christmas "just be over" when things get so busy and ridiculous, but taking a few minutes here and there to teach our kids about giving, also teaches us about our priorities as parents and caregivers. We know what we want for our kids and taking the time to give them these authentic learning opportunities, also gives us that little break and, most importantly, quality time with the children in our lives.

Reaching out over the kilometres

by Colleen Wood

I remember the conversation clearly. A good friend had asked my husband and me out for a coffee at Tim Horton's one evening. His wife had wanted to come too, but she remained home with their infant son. Blair and I had worked together as colleagues in Ottawa for many years. He was the youth worker at

Westminster Presbyterian Church and I was at a similar position at St. Giles Presbyterian Church. Together we worked on many projects, including a Presbytery-wide youth service. We became friends, and I became good friends with his wife as well, enjoying conversations and occasional runs together.

About the same time I moved to Toronto, Blair and his wife moved to Princeton, New Jersey, where he began a combined MDiv, and MA in Youth Ministry. But here we were—blessed to be back in the same city again. They had just had their first child and the coffee was the opportunity for Blair to ask us to be their son's Godparents. We were incredible honoured to be asked. I was slightly overwhelmed, wondering if I was spiritually 'up to the task'. Yet, once my husband and I had time to talk and pray about it, and after a conversation with Vivian, we agreed. At Garrett's baptism, we affirmed our faith, and vowed to nurture Garrett's.

I hadn't grown up with formal Godparents, although my husband John, baptised Methodist, did. However, John's Godparents lived in England and his family immigrated to Canada when he was three, so much of his relationship with them was long distance. This was way before inexpensive long distance telephone and email made connecting over distances easier. (We did visit John's Godparents in England a few years ago and had a delightful time with them, so they had been able to establish a relationship with my husband even over the kilometres.) So, we both had some questions as to how to be Godparents!

What we did have was a strong belief in mentoring from when we had both been more actively involved in youth ministry, so we brought this into our practice of Godparenting. As Garrett's Godmother, I was agreeing to mentor Garrett in his spiritual journey. I would look for opportunities to show Garrett how I walked with God, and explore ways to help him in his own journey. It was wonderful to watch Garrett grow and to be a part of his life.

After a few short years, we learned that Garrett's family, which now included a second child, would be returning to Princeton so Blair could begin a Ph.D. Our Godson would now be many miles away, yet the vows we took to nurture his Christian walk were for life! Now we had to get creative!

Many of you may have children or teenagers in your life that you care about. Many of you may be one of their connections, maybe the only one, to the life of faith. So, how can you get creative in that relationship, especially when the miles separate you?

First, and foremost—pray. No matter where Garrett is, we can pray for him. It's even better when we know what is going on in his life. When Garrett is starting school each

Fall, I pray for him. When he was away at camp for his first time this summer, I prayed for him. When he became a big brother, I prayed for him. I also pray for his parents.

Secondly, mark milestones. Young people go through many milestones—graduations, birth of siblings, starting something new. A simple card or phone call will let that child know that they are cared for. And always find a relevant Bible verse to include with that card or a reminder that you will be praying for them.

Finally, gift appropriately. Anyone can give a toy, which we sometimes do, but we also feel a responsibility to give gifts of faith. We decided that we would not give Garrett Christmas gifts because at Christmas Garrett receives gifts from parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. Ours would just be lost in the pile! We decided instead to give Advent gifts. Generally, these are gifts that have a Christian content, often for counting the days until Christmas, or crafts relevant to the season. One year we gave a Christmas nativity. Another year we gave an Advent calendar with a picture of the nativity on the front, and fair-trade chocolate on the inside. I am currently putting together a small Thanksgiving package for Garrett and his sisters. It has some small crafts for Thanksgiving, and a short note with a Bible verse on it. Go to a Christian bookstore and look for a small toy or book that you can include with a birthday gift. As the child gets older, be certain that they have an age-appropriate Bible. You can find wonderful 'piggy' banks that have three sections—saving, sharing, and spending— to help children learn about sharing. Not everything costs money—you can also download free colouring sheets and crafts online to send along with cards and gifts. Not every gift has to be faith oriented, but do try to give some that have a faith component.

Garrett is a part of our family. We try to make him a priority in our busy lives even when separated by the kilometres. Now those miles have grown again with Garrett having moved a year ago to British Columbia. It's harder to connect by phone (or Skype) due to a three-hour time difference, but soon Garrett will be able to send emails and text messages. We are blessed that we do get to see Garrett most years as his family visits with grandparents in the area, and this year we have decided that we are able to visit for Christmas. We are looking forward to some great quality time with him and his family. Sometimes I feel like I do so little, yet I am still honoured to be part of this young man's life. I look forward to doing what I can to help him walk with God, and knowing that God is always close to him, no matter how many miles separate us.

Colleen Wood is a proud mother of two and Godmother of four.

Whoever said, "You can't have your cake and eat it too," never heard of Gift Annuities

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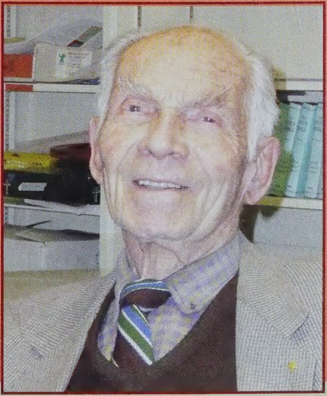

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The Gifts of

Leadership Notes

This service is based on the Christmas Story using scripture readings from the Gospels in the New Testament. It encourages the worshippers to think of Christmas in a new way as we think of the gifts that Mary, the Angels, the Shepherds, and the Wise Men gave to the baby Jesus, but also to each of us, faithful followers of Jesus. We will end the service remembering that together, as we worship, we are united in the love of God through the greatest gift given to humankind—the gift of Jesus Christ, who is the embodiment of Love! He is and always will be our example of love in the World.

This worship service can be shared by participants of all ages. Various people can read the 'leader' sections.

A variety of symbols will be

used during the service. These symbols can be placed in the centre of the room on a small worship table, or under a Christmas tree.

Supplies: A Christmas tree with lights on it or a small table, a candle and matches (if using the worship table), a picture of a mother holding a new baby, an angel figurine, a shepherd's crook or cane, three boxes to represent the wise men's gifts, and a heart—this can be a pillow or even just a heart cut out of paper. Be creative with your symbols, making them unique for your group and the variety of cultures represented in your group and at your church.

Call to Worship

Leader: We come today to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, a babe in a manger.

All: The precious babe in a manger comes to us as a gift from God Almighty to show us what true love is.

Leader: The love of Jesus knows no bounds, it leads us to experience hope, to live in joy with one another, and to share everlasting peace.

All: May the love, hope, joy, and peace of Jesus be with us all forevermore.

Leader: And, may it enable us to reach out and to share the gifts we have with one another in the name of Jesus Christ.

All: Let us worship God together as witnesses to the love of God in Jesus Christ!

Hymn: #119 Hope is a star (verses 1, 2, and 3)

During the singing of the hymn, turn on the Christmas tree lights or light a candle at the centre of the worship table.

Opening Prayer

Loving God, we come to you with
our hearts filled with awe

for the gift you have given us freely. The gift of your Son, born to us is so precious in our sight. We adore you for trusting in us so that we may know this precious gift intimately.

May the hope, joy, peace, and love of Jesus be born anew in our hearts this Christmas season. May the gifts that are ours be shared freely with those we meet and those with whom we live so that the message of your everlasting love may be felt from one end of your world to the next.

With your Son as our example, we are blessed! May we share our blessing so that others may too be touched by you. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

The Gifts of Christmas

Leader: The Christmas season is filled with presents being wrapped and unwrapped. May we take this time to look at gifts that are not wrapped in tissue and paper, but are wrapped with faith and praise! May the gifts of Mary, the angels, the shepherds, and the wise men help us to cherish the gift of love as experienced in the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ.

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

Read: Luke 1:46–56 and Luke 2:1–7

Hymn Response: #161 What child is this (verse 1)

During the singing of the hymn, place the picture of a young mother and child on the table or under the Christmas tree.

Prayer Response

Thank you Mary, mother of Jesus, for sharing your newborn son, Jesus Christ with us, so that we too may rejoice in God Almighty. May we never forget your journey, the highs and the lows in the name of service for God even at your young age. May we too serve God by singing our praises in our every action.

All: We promise to give of ourselves as you did so freely by prayerfully singing praise to God. Amen.

The Angels and the Shepherds

Read: Luke 2:8–20

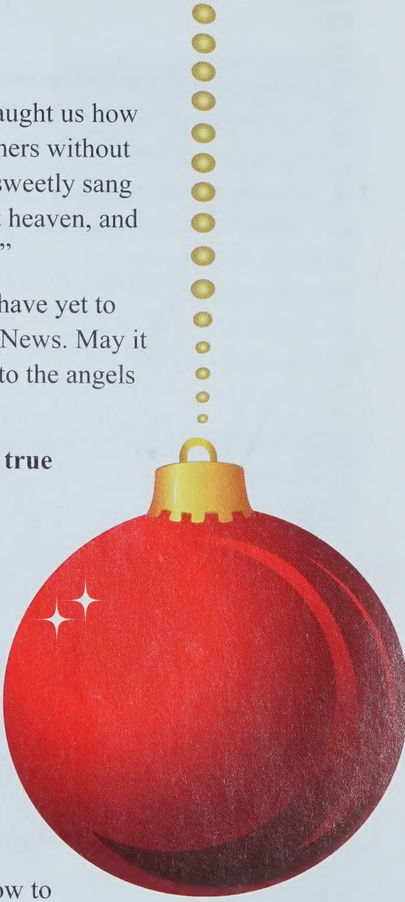
Hymn Response: # 147 Angels we have heard on high (verses 1 and 2)

During the singing of the hymn, place the angel figurine and the shepherd's crook/cane on the table or under the Christmas tree.

Prayer Response
Thank you to the angels and shepherds, who taught us how to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others without delay. May we never forget the message they sweetly sang from their hearts: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours."

May the Good News reach out to others, who have yet to hear the story so they too will know the Good News. May it be spread from the shepherds on bended knee to the angels singing on the highest mountain top.

All: We promise to share our Good News in true glory in your wonderful name. Amen.



The Wise Men

Read: Matthew 2:1–12

Hymn Response: Hymn # 173 We three kings (verse 1)

During the hymn, place three boxes representing the wise men's three gifts on the table or under the Christmas tree.

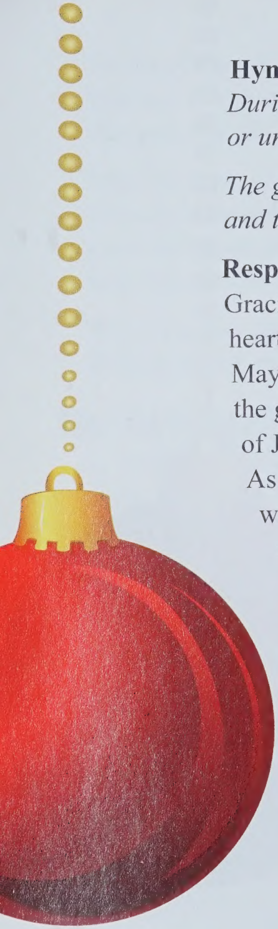
Prayer Response
Thank you to the wise men, who showed us how to faithfully witness to God. May we never forget that to show homage is as simple as giving of ourselves in the moment. May we follow the wise men's lead and give gifts of meaning from our hearts to show our adoration for our Saviour.

May we not be afraid to return home to witness to the news of Jesus Christ. May we instead reach out from within our homes to welcome others into the community of faith with living praise.

All: We promise to witness in faithfulness in the name of the Prince of Peace. Amen.

Love: Jesus Christ

Read: John 13:31–35



Hymn Response: # 706 Come, let us sing
During the singing of the hymn, the heart is placed on the table or under the Christmas tree.

The group is invited to link arms to experience the unity of God and to feel the love of one another.

Response Prayer
Gracious God, we unite together to lovingly share the gifts of our heart with one another and with those we meet in your name. May our gifts be signs to others that we are all called to give the gift of faithful service, while sharing the wonderful news of Jesus Christ, who encourages us all to give all that we have. As we live our lives in service, sharing of the Good News by willingly giving of ourselves, may the love of God in Jesus Christ be felt by all! May we love one another as Jesus Christ has loved us.

All: Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are united in the love of Jesus Christ. May we always love one another. Amen.

Hymn: # 119 Hope is a star (verse 4)

Closing Litany

Leader: We leave together in the name of God, following the example of Jesus Christ, the babe in a manger.

All: We find our hearts filled with the stories of Mary, the angels, the shepherds, and the wise men.

Leader: May their stories lead us to give of ourselves as you ask of us in faithful service, witness, and in love.

All: In the name of the Jesus Christ, we give ourselves in never ending Love! Amen.

Rev. Angela J. Cluney grew up in rural Nova Scotia attending West River Presbyterian Church, Durham in the Pictou Presbytery. Angela is currently the Associate Minister of Christian Education at Leaside Presbyterian Church in Toronto, where her focus is working with young families, children, and youth.

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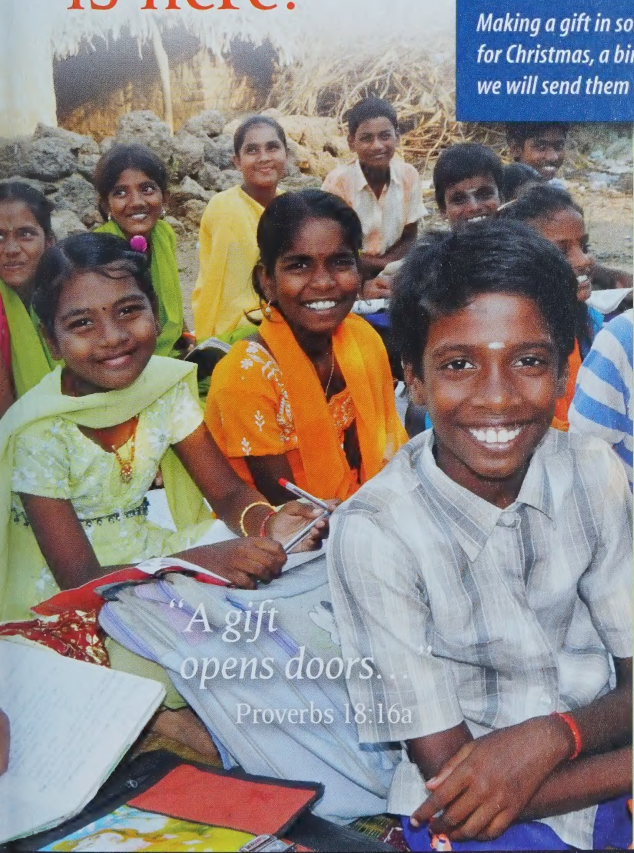

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Proverbs 18:16a

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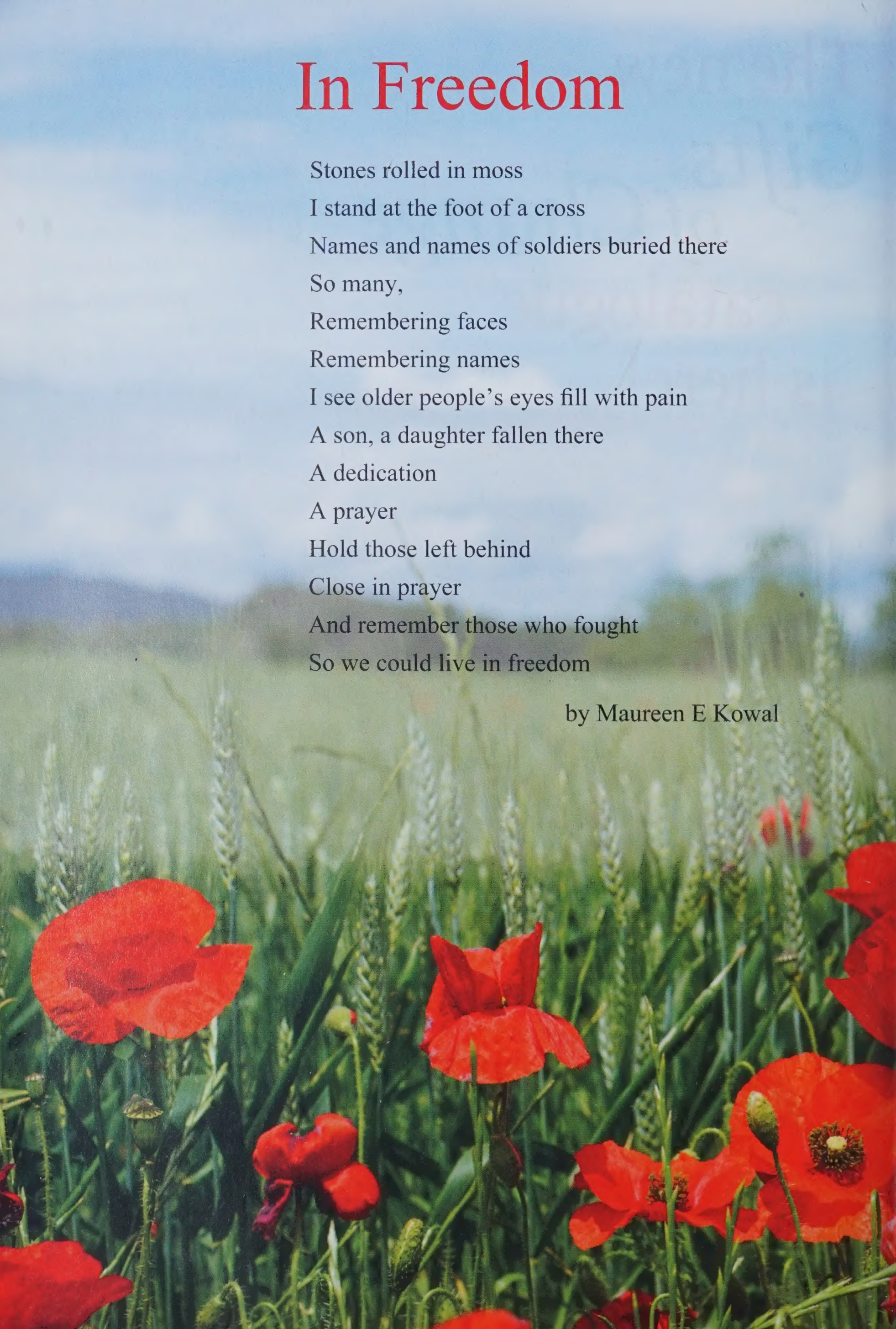
In Freedom

Stones rolled in moss
I stand at the foot of a cross
Names and names of soldiers buried there
So many,
Remembering faces
Remembering names
I see older people's eyes fill with pain
A son, a daughter fallen there
A dedication
A prayer
Hold those left behind
Close in prayer
And remember those who fought
So we could live in freedom

by Maureen E Kowal



Remembrance Day Prayer

God of Peace, we remember.

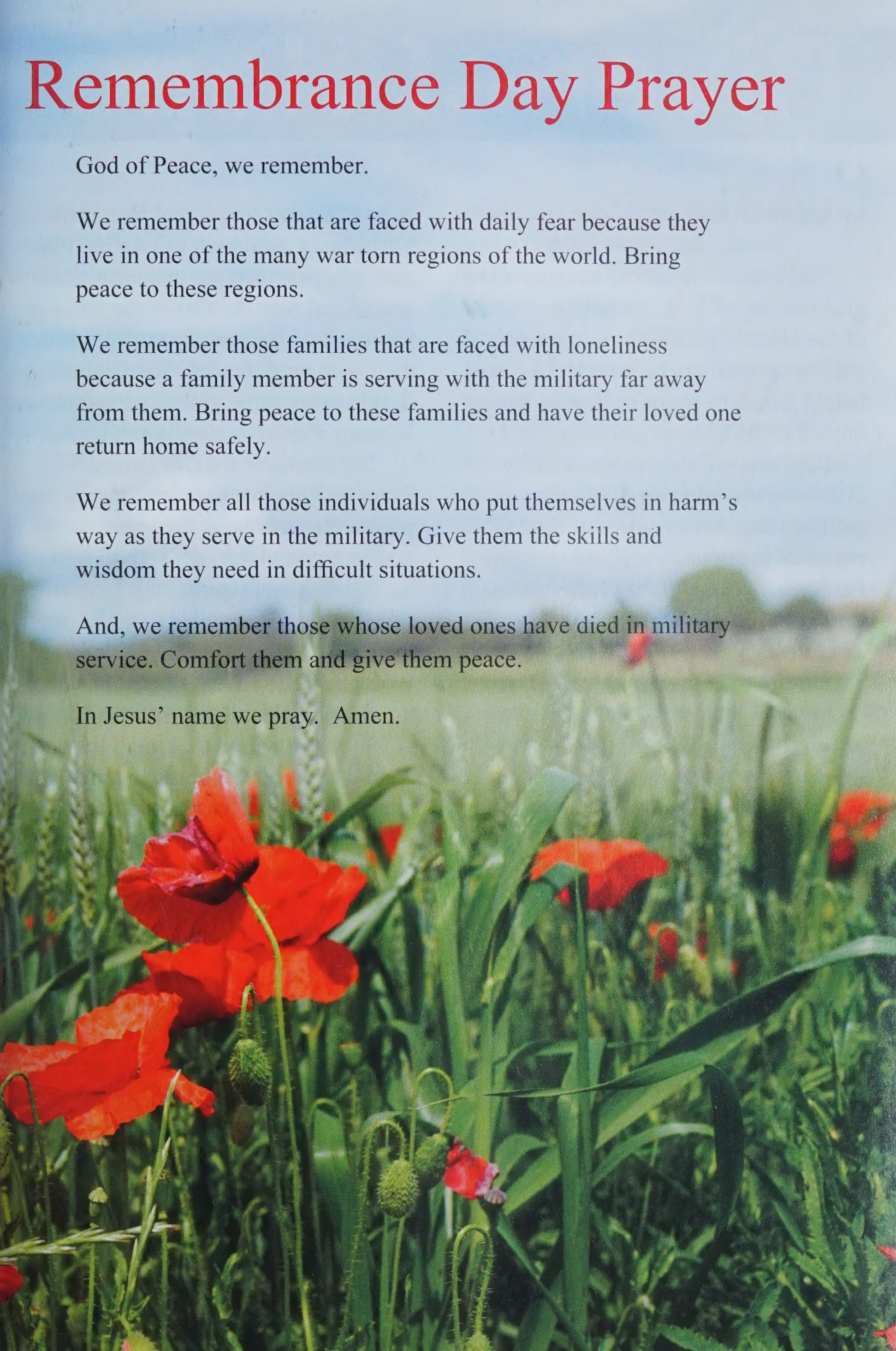
We remember those that are faced with daily fear because they live in one of the many war torn regions of the world. Bring peace to these regions.

We remember those families that are faced with loneliness because a family member is serving with the military far away from them. Bring peace to these families and have their loved one return home safely.

We remember all those individuals who put themselves in harm's way as they serve in the military. Give them the skills and wisdom they need in difficult situations.

And, we remember those whose loved ones have died in military service. Comfort them and give them peace.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



River of Hope

by Alexis McKeown

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns. Psalm 46:4–5 (NRSV)

I have never been surrounded by 2000 women; let alone 2000 women gathered together to celebrate God's presence in prayer, song, and worship. Participants came to the Gathering in Gaylord Palms, Florida, on July 18–22, 2012 to:

- nurture their faith;
- broaden their involvement in Presbyterian Women (PW);
- learn about current issues for their denomination and around the world;
- learn and participate in mission, and
- leave invigorated and excited to share their faith and what they learned with their congregations.

Wow! Doesn't that sound like a tall bill? Maybe too much to take in? PW certainly provided the opportunities, and I liked how the Gathering left it in the hands of the participants to fulfill their own expectations. The Gathering is held every three years by Presbyterian Women, Presbyterian Church USA.

The theme of the Gathering, River of Hope, was successfully woven through the entire event. It was interpreted through activities like the Spirit Island (spirituality centre), speakers who connected to the plenary topics—The River is Deep, The River is Wide, and The River is Life for All; and the morning devotions, Splashes of Joy.

Speakers shared their own lives and life's work. Cassandra Carmichael reflected on how she changed her life when she got pregnant, shedding all environmental toxins from her person and house—no make-up, processed meals, harmful cleaners, or bottled

2012 Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women

water. Noelle Damico, who serves on the PC (USA)'s round table on human trafficking , passionately spoke on her work, explaining that human trafficking has many forms. People of both sexes are trafficked for labour; human trafficking isn't only about women and girls, but also about men and boys.

Other speakers highlighted the long-lasting and far-reaching impact humans have on the environment in Eastern Europe, Haiti, Sudan, and America. Whether the environment is damaged from pollution, the stripping of natural resources, carelessness, or the need for material goods—people suffer. Damage means villages and cities are flooded, people are sick because of diseases, and God's children are thirsty because of undrinkable water and dried-up rivers and streams.

PW also shared its projects with participants. Money was raised, prayers were received, participants learned, and action was taken. The following projects were supported: human trafficking, racial ethnic leadership training, maternal and child health, Native peoples of South Dakota, migrant farm workers, and water wells in South Sudan.

The Gathering turned every plenary into an occasion to worship. Scripture, music, interpretive dance, symbolism, scriptures, devotional messages, and speakers came together during two hours as a means of worship. It was easy to become refreshed and inspired by these daily journeys.

It was the daily workshops and forums that let the women focus on what personally interested them. There were dramas about women of the Bible, experiences shared from exposure tours, and workshops presenting a theological base for eco-justice. Workshops also covered topics like church growth, racism, mission

education, and a holistic church.

Fellowship was also a very important component of the Gathering. Synod lunches, ice cream parties, reunion events, book club lunches, and many more activities were planned, mainly to socialize. Beyond the "scheduled" fun stuff, every corner, meal table, or walk was a reason to catch up or meet someone new. There was true interest in each other's lives, PW circles, and congregations.

One of my favourite areas was PW Live. It was an interactive space to learn and be exposed to mission, justice and peace, and community-building activities. Areas were designated for craft demonstrations meant for fundraising as well as to help with hands-on mission projects. I particularly liked the area set up for justice and peace. People gathered for community prayer; materials for justice projects were distributed; and immediate action could be taken either through letter writing to government agencies or a quarter collection.

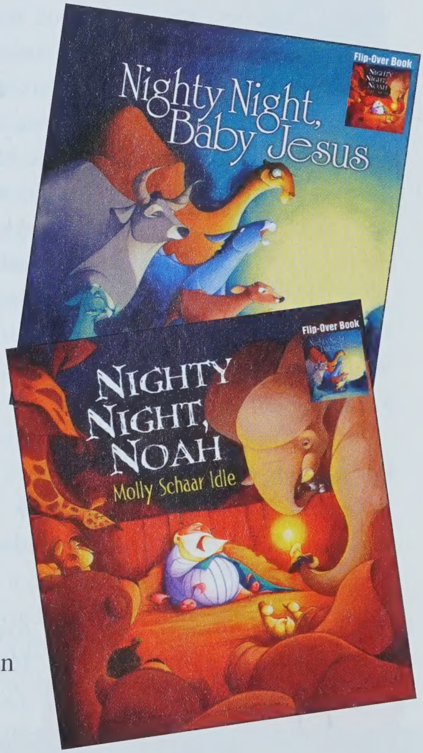
As well, during one afternoon, the women had the opportunity to leave their hotel groups and participate in mission excursions. They journeyed to a migrant farm workers ministry, a food bank, a community centre, or a training centre for adults with developmental disabilities.

I often wondered why women of different ages, races, lifestyles, socio-economic status, family life, or work situation, want to gather together. After spending a week with Presbyterian Women (USA), the only answer I can share is that they just do. With the wide variety of activities, worship experiences, and opportunities to learn—the only common factor was faith. The reminder that God is in our midst was enough reason for each woman to attend the Gathering in Florida, and from the expressions on their faces, it was a success.

Coalition of
Immokalee
Workers
Advocacy

Reviews

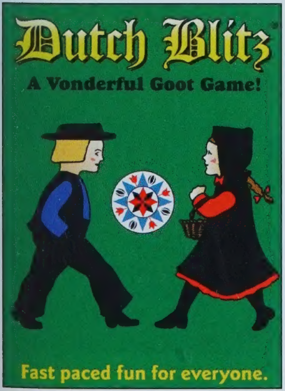
This month, we feature books and items that make great gifts for friends and family.


Nighty Night, Baby Jesus
Flip-Over Book
Nighty Night, Noah
Flip-Over Book
Nighty Night, Noah
Molly Schaar Idle

For a young child …
Nighty Night, Baby Jesus and Nighty Night Noah
by Molly Schaar Idle

This book is actually two books in one. One side has *Nighty Night, Baby Jesus*, and then you flip it over to read *Nighty Night, Noah*. *Nighty Night, Baby Jesus* is subtitled, a Noisy Nativity, which makes it great fun to read as the animals all raise a ruckus at the arrival of Jesus, until Mary finally calms the scene with a gentle, Shhh. In *Nighty Night, Noah*, we tuck all the animals in from A to Y, with Noah finally giving the last Zzzz. The book is beautifully illustrated and would make a lovely gift for children ages 2 to 4. It is perfect for bedtime reading.

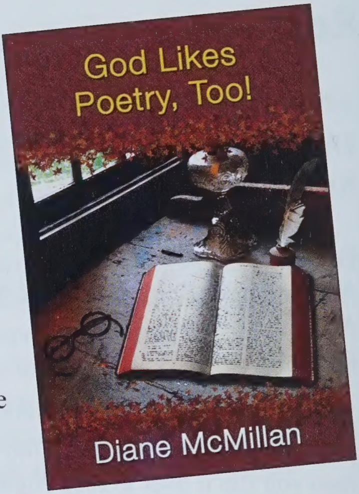
The Book Room has a wonderful selection of children's books for all ages.


Dutch Blitz
A Vonderful Goot Game!
Fast paced fun for everyone.

For a teen …
Dutch Blitz

If you have been involved in youth ministry in the last 20 years, you may have come across this 'Vonderful Goot Game!' It is a game of speed for 2–4 players, ages 8 and up, using beautifully illustrated cards with Dutch characters on them. The creators say, and I would agree, it is a little like solitaire, but with multiple players and speed involved. It is a lot of fun for spending time with the young people in your life!

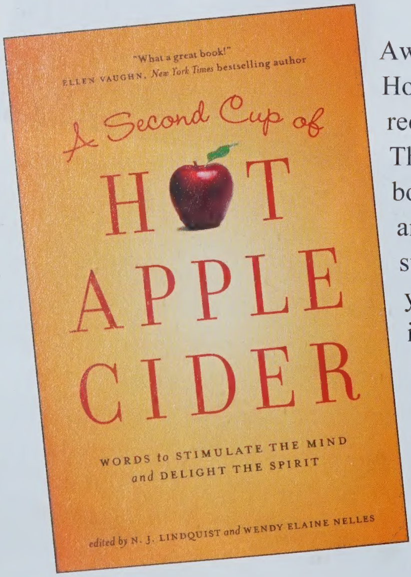
For your WMS President or your Elder …
God Likes Poetry, Too!
by Diane McMillan


God Likes Poetry, Too!
Diane McMillan

This book is a large collection of short poems—many are just half a page in length. What I liked best about this book is that many of the poems are prayers. It includes some meal graces, prayers for certain seasons, an evening prayer, a prayer of encouragement, and even a gardener's prayer. This is Diane McMillan's third book. The poems and prayers would inspire your WMS President or Elder, and give them a resource that they can share with others.

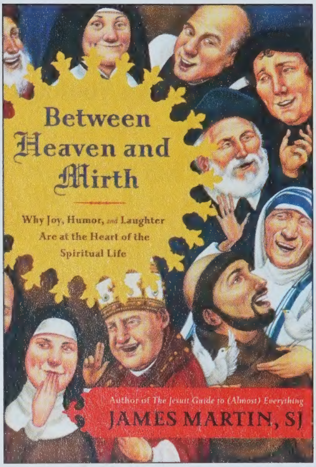
Finally, I was pleasantly surprised to learn that 10% of the proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to Presbyterian World Service and Development. So, when you give this book, you give a gift to a friend, and a gift to PWS&D.

For a young mom …
A Second Cup of Hot Apple Cider
edited by N.J. Lindquist and Wendy Elaine Nelles


"What a great book!"
ELLEN VAUGHN, New York Times bestselling author
A Second Cup of
HOT
APPLE
CIDER
WORDS to STIMULATE THE MIND and DELIGHT THE SPIRIT
edited by N. J. LINDQUIST and WENDY ELAINE NELLES

At the 2012 Canadian Christian Writer's Awards Gala in June, I often heard the words, Hot Apple Cider. The short stories in this book received many nominations and some awards. This is the second book in the series and the book contains "words to stimulate the mind and delight the spirit." It is a book of short stories, making it perfect for a time-strapped young mother. The collection includes inspiring stories, challenging stories, some sad ones, and a few quirky ones thrown into the mix. It has just over 50 stories so there is something for everyone. And … some of them would be perfect reads for a WMS devotion.

For your minister …
Between Heaven and Mirth
by James Martin, SJ


Between Heaven and Mirth
Why Joy, Humor, and Laughter Are at the Heart of the Spiritual Life
Author of The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything
JAMES MARTIN, SJ

Most of our ministers need a reason to laugh and this is a great book to start them laughing. As Christians, we are called to be joy-filled, but all too often, we take ourselves too seriously, or get bogged down by the important busyness of life. Ministers live this daily, both in their own lives, and the lives of their members. Martin suggests ways to bring more joy into our life, and his book provides ample opportunity to begin the journey with laughter with its many funny tales and jokes throughout.

For a special sister, wife, or mother …
Fair Trade Products

Buying fair trade products gives twice. First, they make a lovely gift, but they also benefit the crafts person that makes them by ensuring they receive a living wage for their work.

The Book Room has a great selection of jewellery, small bags, cards, and pottery. Consider giving your child's teacher a pair of earrings created from recycled chip bags, made in Nicaragua. Do you know someone who loves birds? There are lovely bird whistles made of clay. A Christmas ornament is always a nice hostess gift for a friend and there are a few fair trade options available.

Mission In Action

Todd and Annika Statham
Malawi

If the Blind Lead the Blind

"Our first attempts at teaching. Results: virtually zero." No, this isn't an entry from *my* journal. Honest. I had to smile at these words when I came across this despondent report made back in 1890 by Roman Catholic missionaries sent to evangelize the tribes around Lake Malawi. Because, if I had kept a diary, at times I would be tempted to write something similar. "My first attempts at teaching at Zomba Theological College (ZTC). Results: virtually zero."

June 2012 brings to an end my first full year of teaching at ZTC. While "virtually zero" is too harsh a verdict, there are frequent flashes where I am made painfully aware of three things:

1) how much I have yet to learn as an historian.
2) how much I have yet to learn as a teacher.
3) how much I have yet to learn about my students' culture.

Actually it's the third item that's giving me late nights and coffee-rot stomach. The first two are simply part of the learning curve for a new professor. But the third … it's really only after a full year of teaching that I am coming to realize that the cultural "gap" between the West and Africa is of grand canyon proportions. I swear that my students must see, hear, and feel the world differently than do I. (For all I know, they might even smell and taste it differently too.) Because, after a year of teaching them, it is becoming pretty clear that where I see blue, they see yellow. Where I see a problem, they see an answer. Where I see gain, they see loss. Where I despair, they hope. Culture functions like a pair of sunglasses. It tints everything we encounter in a certain light. It is not that my culture is right and my students' is wrong. Western culture and African culture are just, well, *different*.

Like the time I assigned my class a research paper. The assignments were returned to me with at least half the class having simply copied out an article from the theological dictionary, word for word! They were not cheating (at least not by their standards). They were being consistent with their cultural assumptions about learning. We all know that Western culture prizes originality and self-discovery, so learning to "think for oneself" is one of the chief aims of any decent school. African culture is very different. Here, the elders possess authority and wisdom. They pass down their accumulated knowledge to learners, who accept it respectfully

Overseas Staff Birthdays

December

15 – Rick Allen, Kenya
27 – Mary Gorombey, Hungary
29 – Rachel Julianna Pandy-Szekeres, Hungary

and without question. The goal is not to realize your individual potential as much as to become fully integrated in your community; not to "discover" the new, but to "treasure" the old. In fact, this context of "thinking for oneself" verges on the anti-social; critical thinking—the bread and butter of any Canadian college or university education—can seem downright disrespectful.

So guess what? As professor, I find myself asked to play a role akin to the African elder. *And I don't like it*. I am trying in vain to provoke my students to disagree with me in class. But they do not dare to disrespect 'the Authority'. I beg my students not to copy down my every word when I lecture, but their pens still scratch away furiously. I am learning to not snort in derision and growl "think for yourself" when hands still pop up at the end of a lecture on some long-debated topic from the church's past: "But Dr. Todd (note: my last name has long been dropped as unpronounceable), what should *we* believe about this?"

One more example of the cultural gap … I am marking examination papers last semester. I did not write the exam, and the question was a pedestrian sort of one about Martin Luther—e.g., "Who was Luther and what was his importance for Christianity?" Most people know something about Luther, the renegade monk turned church reformer whose radical ideas on grace and Scripture triggered the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. Soon after I had sat down to the mountain of exam papers, a headache began to pound. Almost all the students had wasted a good chunk of their answer describing Luther's family: his birthplace and family origins, his father Hans, his siblings, his wife Katie and all their kids (some students even mentioned the children who died in infancy). "Nonsense," I muttered as my red pen slashed angrily across their papers. "They should be focusing on Luther's theology or his heroic stand against the Pope, not piddling about with his parents and progeny." It was only after a flood of red ink and many failed exams that it dawned on me. Their answers weren't wrong after all (yes, I went back and adjusted their grades!). They were just answering the question *differently*. Ask a Western Christian, "Who is Luther," and the pronoun "who" will refer to the individual—*just* the individual. Indeed, the fact of Luther's lonely stand on the word of God against the whole Roman church is, according to some scholars, the headwaters of

individualism in Western culture. Ask an African the same question, and the answer would be unthinkable apart from the thick tangle of extended family relations: mothers, fathers, children, and so on. So in their own way, my students were answering the question just fine.

Sometimes I worry if the gap between our cultures can be crossed or if it is a ditch that divides. My students don't know much, if anything, about the history of Christianity. My job is to guide them into the labyrinth-like history of a two-thousand-year-old faith, populated by martyrs and monks and missionaries, crammed full of cathedrals and councils and crusades. But how? It brings to my mind Jesus' comment against the Pharisees: "And if the blind lead the blind, they both shall fall into a ditch" (Matthew 15:14).

Thank God he gives me moments where I am made aware that the ditch between our cultures, however deep and divisive, is not impassible. I believe God is teaching me that the way to cross over is through humility and the Holy Spirit. Because on those rare occasions when I am humbled about my own blindness, the Holy Spirit often teaches me something—teaches me, in fact, through the *very same* cultural assumptions of my students that otherwise drive me crazy.

A good example was the question about Luther. Their "wrong" answer about Luther startled me with how my Canadian cultural assumptions make me think of a person as a bare individual rather than an individual-in-community. But whose perspective—the Western or the African—is arguably better and more biblical? That's a question worth debating ….

Another time, after one of my well researched and carefully polished lectures on the development of church offices in early Christianity (e.g., elder, deacon, bishop, priest) lulled the entire class into a sleep-like stupor—okay, the topic is pretty boring—I didn't grow resentful at my unappreciative audience. Instead, I tried an experiment in cross-cultural communication. I casually mentioned that many churches in the first few centuries of Christianity not only had an office for elder, deacon, and bishop, but also for an "exorcist." Boom! That did it. The class woke up, hands shot up for questions, and we spent the next 45 minutes arguing about whether Malawian churches should restore the ancient office of a demon exorcist. Turns out I learned something too. I had to sneak back to the library after class to find out more information about exorcism in the early church. You see, my university professors in church history, like most Western Christians, were fully embarrassed by the fact that early Christians believed in demonic spirits. Exorcism? That is the stuff of B-grade Hollywood horror movies, right? So my profs tended to hurry over the topic if not ignore it entirely. I did not learn much about it as a result. But whose perspective on exorcism—the Western or the African—aligns with the gospel stories of Jesus and the records of the early church?

"If the blind lead the blind, they both shall fall into a ditch."

As a mounting number of failures and frustrations on my meagre teaching resumé show, the cultural ditch between the West and Africa is real, significant, and it poses a serious challenge to understanding and empathy even among fellow Christians. At the same time, after a year of employment as a "blind guide" of sorts to students, from a very different culture, I'm learning (the hard way) that one of the most fruitful places to read the Bible and to think about God, the gospel, and the purpose of the church, *is right smack in the middle of the ditch.* The people of God are not edified when—like in older times—we, Westerners, attempt to force Africans (or any other group) to think out the Christian faith on *our* cultural terms. Nor when Africans (or any other group) think out the Christian faith exclusively on *their* cultural terms—as some well-meaning Christians in the West want to have it. Rather, when Christians from different cultures meet over the ditch to listen as to how the other thinks about God, reads Scripture, and struggles to follow Jesus, we can deepen and disturb each other's faith.

So, perhaps it is not a case of "the blind leading the blind" after all. Rather, it's realizing that different cultural backgrounds make believers around the world see only in part—but *together* we might see more fully and clearly the glory of God and his salvation.

In the Society

Presbyterial

Waterloo-Wellington Presbyterial held their Spring Rally on May 14 in Rockwood Presbyterian Church, Rockwood, with the theme, Changing the Face of Mission. After singing two gathering songs, Betty Bonner of Rockwood Church, gave a warm welcome. She mentioned that this was the first time Rockwood had hosted a WMS rally.

The Rev. Linda Paquette, minister at Rockwood, also welcomed everyone and led worship. Her meditation was based on Acts 10:44–48. The Rev. Dr. Lynda Reid, our Synod/Synodical Education Consultant, was the guest speaker. Lynda wove her personal story of serving in the Presbyterian Church for 43 years into the theme of the rally. She reflected on the various positions she held within the church and what changes have occurred in those years. Throughout her presentation, she focused on how *Glad Tidings* magazine has changed its content and front covers, and she read excerpts from some of the issues, highlighting how mission has changed since she entered Christian ministry. Lynda is retiring in June, and on behalf of Waterloo-Wellington Presbyterial, Wilma Welsh paid tribute to Lynda for her dedication, service, achievements, and accomplishments, and she wished her well in her retirement. The Presbyterial presented Lynda with a bouquet of roses. Eloise Gardiner closed the rally with prayer.

-Geri Schmidt

Lindsay Presbyterial held their Summer Rally on June 20, 2012 in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Lindsay. Following a delicious potluck luncheon, we gathered for devotions, led by Joan Snider. The scripture was Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

The poem "The Drought" by Bonnie Compton Hanson was read. A young mother lives through the drought and loses hope. Her little son comes in and says a simple prayer for rain. After a while

she sees the clouds forming and the rains come. Her faith is restored.

Then, the reading, "Helping Others Win" from the book '15 Minutes with God for Grandma' was used to show us that it's more important that everyone finishes the race than win the race.

Brenda Thistle taught us how to sign the words to the hymn, "What a friend we have in Jesus." Brenda, a retired policewoman, learned signing at the Bob Rumball School for the Deaf so that a deaf boy in her congregation could understand the children's story. In time, she was signing the hymns, scripture, and the sermon. Another way she served was by spending her holidays helping at the Evangelical School for the Deaf in Luguillo, Puerto Rico. Her hobby is working with stained glass and she gave an interesting talk on the subject explaining the tools, types of glass, and the procedures of that art.

-Phyllis Davis

Barrie Presbyterial held their annual meeting on May 10 in Willis Presbtyerian Church in Jarrett. The theme for the year is Proverbs 3:5, Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. President Evelyn Horne welcomed all and constituted the meeting with prayer. Carolyn Woodrow brought greetings from the church. The Midland WMS presented the devotion based on Romans 12:1–2.

After the reports were duly received and accepted, the Synodical delegates presented great reviews of the day. Elaine Steele brought us an update of the recent council meeting. Jill Pardy led a memorial for seven members. Elaine Steele installed the officers for 2012–2013. Dorothy Ruddell reviewed some books from the book table. Evelyn Horne, assisted by the Synodical delegates, led us in the prayer for mission that was presented at Synodical. A delicious buffet salad dinner was prepared by the Oro-Willis ladies.

Mary Veale–Parker introduced our evening speaker, the Rev. Karen Horst. Karen brought slides of her trip to the Middle East. She spoke on the struggles the Palestinians face (curfews, no access to highways, limited access to jobs). Karen saw them as a beaten people and encouraged us to remember that what we hear may not be the complete story. The Rev. Peter Ruddell gave the closing benediction.

-Jill Pardy

The Scampering of Deer

by Gladys Robson

As I drove up to the House of the Shepherd at Crieff Hills on Friday night around 6: 30 p.m., I was looking forward to a restful weekend. As I rounded the curve, what did I see but a lovely young deer scampering off towards the bush. I unloaded my car and realized that I had enough luggage to last a week. I looked up on the ridge and there a large older deer appeared. He looked at me and then jumped the fence. How exciting! Those deer set the tone for the whole weekend.

Our leader picked up the key from McLean Hall and my friends slowly arrived and I told them my exciting news about seeing the deer. After everyone unpacked and settled in, we enjoyed a quiet meditation. After that, things were not as quiet as we played a great game called Mexican Train. Some of the ladies went directly to bed and I hope that we did not keep them up with our laughing and screaming.

Next morning, I slept in. My roommate brought me coffee in bed—what a luxury. After a delicious big breakfast, we had our morning meditation. Then it was out to the nature trails to enjoy all the benefits that Crieff Hills has to offer. The sun was shining, the wind was blowing in our hair, birds were singing, and it felt good to be alive. It was a beautiful day given to us by God. Some of the ladies just “vegged” either by reading or sleeping.

I was on lunch duty so I hurried back to the kitchen to prepare my celery and carrots. We set the table and got out the bread and butter. Two of the ladies had made delicious soup—pumpkin and vegetable. Before the meal we joined hands and sang Johnny Appleseed as our blessing.

We had guests this year for lunch. Three volunteers from Focus on Nature joined us. The purpose of this group is to educate Grade 6 students in the study of nature combined with computer use. After this simple lunch, we were given a slide show of pictures which the Focus On Nature group had taken on their school walks.

One of their members, we realized, was famous. Darlene Lamb’s grandson, Adam, died at less than 6 months of age from sudden infant death syndrome. To help Darlene in her struggle with depression, a friend invited her to a lake as a place of refuge. While taking photographs at dusk, Darlene happened to look at the sky behind her and saw an image of an angel in the clouds. She quickly took the photograph now known as, "The Gift." This photo has become famous, providing hope and comfort for many during their grief over the loss of a loved one. Look for this picture on the Internet or if you are at a funeral home. It is probably there.

The Focus On Nature group visit Grade 6 students both in their classroom and at various outdoor sites. They teach students how to take pictures with their cameras and then put these pictures into their computer using a program, called Picasa. The students learn about lines, shapes, forms, space, texture, value, colour, and intensity. I didn't realize there was so much to learn in just taking one simple picture. The students are very interested in this course because they learn both about nature and computers at the same time.

The weekend provided learning, meditation, rest, nature, good food, and laughter—a perfect combination for a great retreat!

Gladys Robson was attending a Ladies Retreat with St.-David-St. Patrick Anglican Church in Guelph. She is a member of Westminster-St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Guelph where she serves as an elder and assists with the Toddler, Baby, and Me group once a week.

President's Itinerary

November 5–7
Life and Mission Agency Meeting, Crieff ON

November 8–10
WMS Task Force & Council Executive, Toronto ON

November 25–27
Assembly Council

January 23
Niagara Presbyterial Annual Meeting

Please keep Joan Smith in your prayers as she represents the WMS in Canada and around the world.

Forward in Faith

Great news! We have finally received unofficial notice that the permit will be coming very soon for the Jobat School Hostel in India! It has been a long wait. Once construction begins, the project is expected to take about eight months to complete.

Of course, you will remember that enough funds were raised two years ago for this project, and we have been holding the monies and waiting for this approval. It is a project that will be overseen by a local committee, whose chairperson is Dr. Deborah Tezlo, working alongside with Presbyterian World Service and Development, in particular Guy Smagghe.

I know some of you have expressed concern that we couldn't start building immediately when the funds were raised. It was felt, at the time, that it was important to know exactly how much was available for the project and not start before the fundraising was complete. Since then, we have been waiting for the permit approval in a country that has its own rules and regulations, which are not under our control.

We hope to be celebrating the Hostel's opening in 2013!

As your groups gather after the summer, I would encourage you to look at and participate in the two new projects that were approved at Council in May 2012. We have one overseas project—Maternal Health in Malawi—and a Canadian project to fund special work at The Saskatoon Inner City Mission and The Cariboo Ministry. More details on each of these programs have been sent to groups, and updates will appear in *Glad Tidings* and other WMS resources.

Just a reminder to start saving for the next Women's Gathering. It seems like a long way off, but time will pass quickly and setting aside $50 a month or less, will help you cover your costs more easily.

As we work our way toward the end of the year, please be sure to send in all the donations that have been given to your Groups and Presbyterials well before the end of the year, if possible. It is always a rush around Christmas and if you can get your last offerings sent in by mid-December, that would be great. Remember that cheques sent after the end of the year must be marked clearly for the 2012 year if they represent a 2012 offering, and they must reach our office by January 10 at the latest.

Janet Brewer

Remembering

Irene Mary Farrell
Calvin, Abbotsford BC

Lenore Fletcher
Dr. Margaret Strang Auxiliary, WMS, First Presbyterian Church, Chatham ON

Jean Boucher
St. Andrew's WMS, Huntsville ON

Mary Stewart
St. Paul's, Winchester, and Morewood Presbyterian Church, Morewood ON

Kathryn Fosbery
Presbyterian Women's Group, Knox Church, Port Alberni BC

Louise Wannamaker
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Tweed ON

Jean Griffin
Margaret Jean Hicks
Dolores MacLeod
Joan Penwarden
Ann Reid
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Welland ON

Joyce Jackson
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Whitby ON

Doris Binding
Margaret Hamilton Auxiliary, St. John's, Winnipeg MB

Madge Forster
Campbell Auxiliary, Knox Church, Woodstock ON

Muriel Judd Brown,
Laura K Pleton WMS, St. Andrew's, Windsor ON

Circulation News

Have you paid for your subscription to *Glad Tidings*? Hopefully, by the time this issue of *Glad Tidings* is published, we will have received most of the subscription lists from congregations. It is helpful to have the lists in the office by the November 1 deadline to ensure that any changes/additions/deletions are processed for the January/February issue.

And, if you wondering what to buy for a Christmas or birthday gift, how about a gift subscription to *Glad Tidings*! All you have to do is pay through your *Glad Tidings* secretary in your church or mail it directly to the WMS office.

Finally, if you are an individual subscriber and have moved to a church where there is no WMS group, or if you already belong to a group and are transferring to another group, please notify the new group secretary. If possible, provide her with a copy of the label from a previous issue of *Glad Tidings* so your subscription can be easily transferred.

Alana Martin

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Glad Tidings

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